

Rolling Stone

A full-page photograph of Lin-Manuel Miranda dressed in an 18th-century style costume. He wears a blue coat over a tan waistcoat and breeches, with a large white ruffled cravat. He is striking a dynamic pose, pointing his right index finger forward and gesturing with his left hand. The background is a cloudy sky over a body of water.

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THE RS INTERVIEW

BERNIE FIGHTS ON

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LOUIS C.K.

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Hamilton Mania!

Lin-Manuel Miranda
and How His Hip-Hop
Musical Became
the Hottest Ticket
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RS1263

“All the
News
That Fits”

FEATURES

Hamilton Mania

Lin-Manuel Miranda on how a Revolutionary hip-hop musical became the cultural event of our time.

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He's faced memory loss and the death of old friends, yet he's found peace. Just don't try to tell him what to do.

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ON THE COVER Lin-Manuel Miranda photographed in New York on May 5th, 2016, by **Mark Seliger**. Costume design by Paul Tazewell. Wardrobe supervisor: Scott Westervelt. Hair by Frederick C. Waggoner. Makeup by Nicky Saunders.

**THE
OUTLAW**
Kris
Kristofferson
looks back on
80 years.
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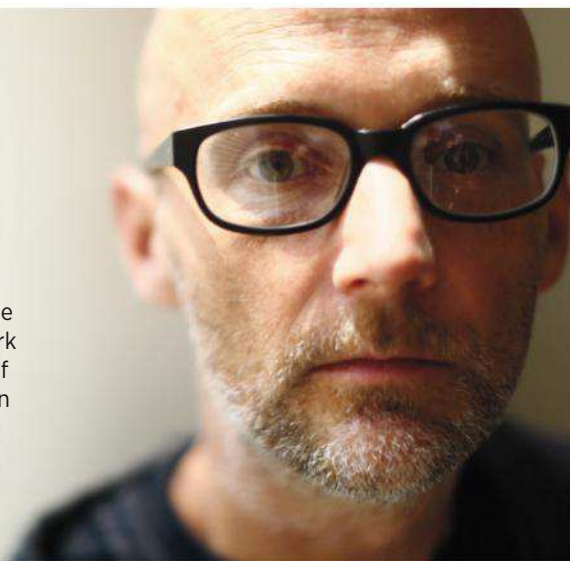
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BOOKS

MOBY'S WILD NINETIES

Moby talks about *Porcelain*, his killer new memoir covering a decade in the downtown New York music scene. "I did a lot of throwing up into porcelain toilets, so it seemed like the perfect title," he says.



MUSIC

MITSKI HITS THE BIG TIME

The 25-year-old Brooklyn indie-pop singer-songwriter discusses the making of *Puberty 2*, one of the most emotionally powerful albums of the year so far.



FEATURE

THE LOST BEATLES COVER

Read the story behind the infamous 1966 *Yesterday and Today* "Butcher" cover, which was withdrawn from sale and is now one of the most valuable LPs in rock history.



FILM

INSIDE THE O.J. DOCUMENTARY

Ezra Edelman, director of *O.J.: Made in America*, delves into the trial's racial backdrop: "This was a victory for black America, which speaks to how little they've had to celebrate."

CRAZY VIP PACKAGES

On the latest episode of Rolling Stone Music Now, we dissect outrageous VIP packages for artists like Black Sabbath and Drake. Plus: What ROLLING STONE staffers are listening to around the office, including Ariana Grande; and we answer reader mail about Prince. The podcast goes live every Monday.

ALL THIS AND MORE AT
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Ozzy Osbourne



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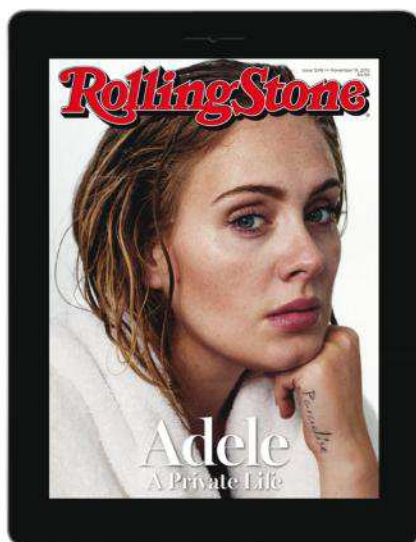


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Correspondence

Love Letters
& Advice

Remembering Prince, 1958-2016

IT WAS A PLEASURE TO READ Joe Levy's honest obituary [RS 1261]. Prince was a musical chef, mixing funk, rock and R&B. His songs transcended boundaries, genres and generations. Thank you for a funky time, your Purpleness. Your music will live forever in my heart.

Ron Morrison
Bourbonnais, IL

THANKS TO JOE LEVY for producing something meaningful, reverential, informative...and also, somehow, healing.

Karina Fox Landward
Salt Lake City

THE PHOTOGRAPH that led Joe Levy's wonderful Prince retrospective was breathtaking, but as a hawk-eyed Prince fan, I couldn't help but notice that, judging by his hair, outfit and guitar, this is Prince on the 1988-89 *Lovesexy* tour and not *Purple Rain*. Considering this legendary dresser's meticulous attention to detail, I say we owe it to him to get it just right.

Adrian Carter
New York

NICE JOB ON EVERYTHING IN the Prince tribute issue. I loved the details Levy got from Prince's childhood friends, like how André Cymone described them skipping family feasts on cold Minnesota nights so they could practice their way up to superstardom. Sounds like Prince knew his destiny from the start.

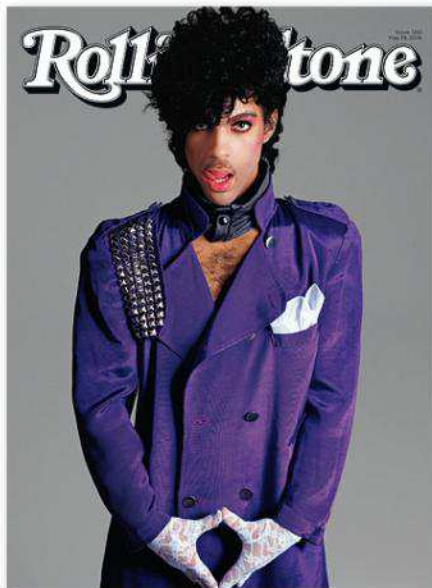
Christie Browne
Via the Internet

I WANTED YOUR PRINCE coverage to go on forever. It was so rich and well-reported. I still

can't wrap my head around the fact that he is gone.

Chuck Sherman, via the Internet

IN HIS MOVING GOODBYE, Stevie Wonder called Prince's music "so picturesque even I could see it." He also rightly described how deeply Prince dived into all genres of music to understand and reinvent them. When we dance to Prince, we



A WONDERFUL MEMORIAL issue to Prince, who lived by the mottos "be yourself" and "free urself." Now the purple tears are flowing.

Nathan Benditzson, Chicago

I'M SO TIRED OF SEEING MY recently deceased heroes on the cover of ROLLING STONE. It's been a hard couple of years.

Daniel DeLong, Ben Lomond, CA

THANK YOU FOR Questlove's intelligent, well-written piece. Really enjoyed the insights into Prince's musical heritage. I'll listen to "Gonna Be a Beautiful Night" with new ears. What it must have been to be a fan and a friend.

Sarah Lee
Northampton, U.K.

WHEN PRINCE BLEW up, he took over the entire entertainment industry. He had music, movies, Grammys, an Oscar...the most brilliant being ever.

Jeff Rittenour
Ottawa, Ontario

know we're in the hands of a grandmaster of jazz, soul, funk and R&B. And most especially of sex and love.

Deirdre McDonald
Via the Internet

THE COVER REMINDED ME OF John Lennon's final photo, in 1980. No words necessary. A loving genius for the ages.

Rich Shearer, San Jose, CA

WAS PRINCE SPECIAL? I AM A 60-year-old male raised on Lynyrd Skynyrd and Molly Hatchet, and I am still grieving. You're damn right he was special.

Randy W. Bostic, Bostic, NC

I CHOKED UP READING SHEILA E.'s lovely tribute to Prince. The detail about how he asked her to marry him while they played "Purple Rain" together on tour was beautiful. No other proposal could ever live up to that.

Vivian Chase, via the Internet

LENNY KRAVITZ COMPARING his time at Paisley Park to Willie Wonka's Chocolate Factory and *The Wizard of Oz* was both awe-inspiring and excruciatingly sad. A kingdom of boundless, in-the-moment creativity. We've lost so much.

Bruce Patterson
Via the Internet

End the Drug War

TIM DICKINSON'S ARTICLE on our failed drug policy was spot-on ["The War on Drugs," RS 1261]. Curbing and disrupting the supply, and harsh punishments, will do little to no good until those on the demand side have access to treatment.

Andy Arnold, Ooltewah, TN

THE 30,000 OPIOID DEATHS now rival the carnage from car crashes or gunshots – are we going to outlaw those too?

Jorge George Paez, Austin

American Hero

GREAT ARTICLE ON CHRIS Evans ["The Anxious Avenger," RS 1261]. Evans is Captain America; he makes you feel patriotic, and you kinda wish he was running for president. Imagine a smart, wholesome, stand-your-ground guy on the campaign trail. The f-bombs give Evans a rough edge, but it's an edge every superhero needs.

Richard Wallon Jr.
Oswego, NY

Space Invasion

I WAS NEVER REALLY A Blink-182 fan, but I do admire Tom DeLonge for being a real artist instead of some 40-year-old rehashing the punk-pop songs of his youth ["Tom DeLonge's Space Odyssey," RS 1261]. A lot of bands these days recycle the old stuff in a desperate attempt to reclaim their fame and make a quick buck.

Chevy Heston
Via the Internet

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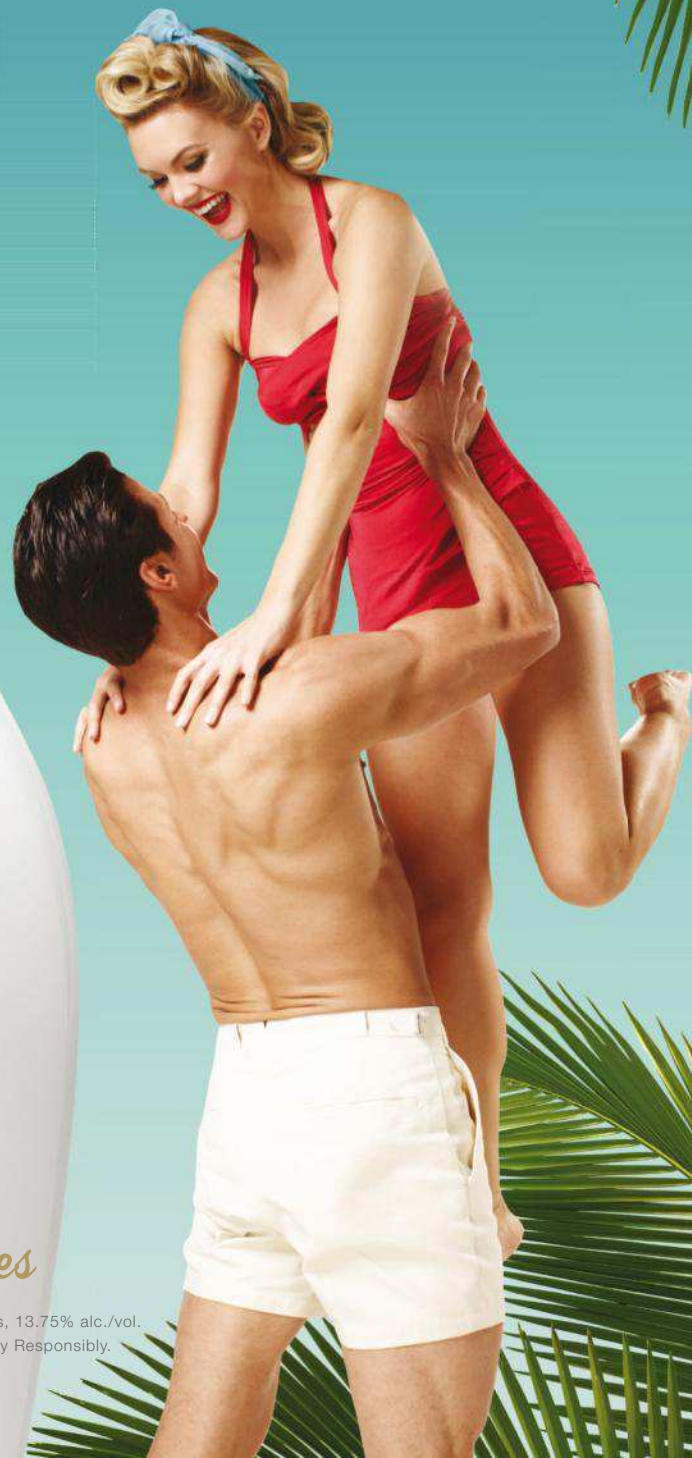
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The Playlist

OUR FAVORITE SONGS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW

MY LIST



Marky Ramone

My Five Favorite Punk Songs

The former Ramones drummer will spend this summer playing the group's classic tunes with his band Marky Ramone's Blitzkrieg.

The Kinks

"All Day and All of the Night"

The raunchiness of the production and Dave Davies' guitar sound were the beginnings of punk. When I first heard it I was like, "Holy shit!"

The Trashmen

"Surfin' Bird"

This is an off-the-wall song that's crazy and insane beyond description. It was different than anything on the radio.

Love

"7 and 7 Is"

This came out 10 years before the genre was really consolidated at CBGB, but it's still punk. It should have gone Number One.

Richard Hell and the Voidoids

"Blank Generation"

I was in this band. This song spoke for the populace at the time CBGB was going. It reflects a moment in time.

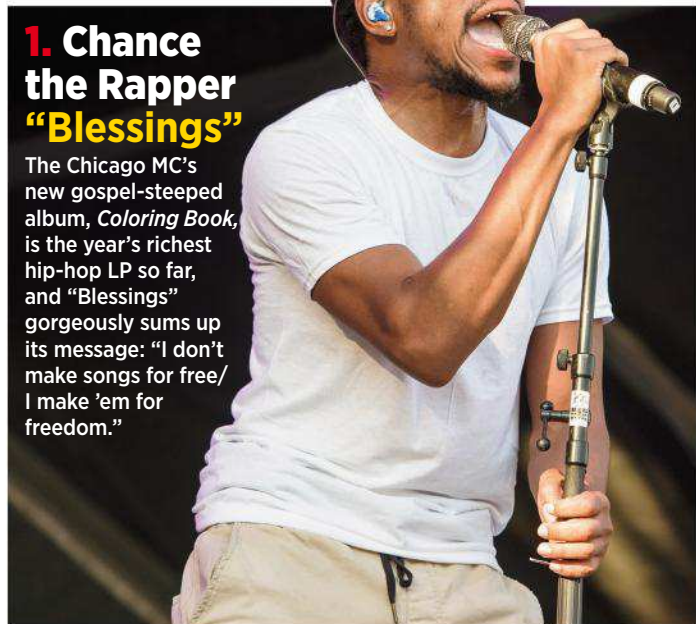
The Music Machine

"Talk Talk"

The fuzz bass, production and singing on this had all the elements of punk. It's filthy, sludgy and different from anything else that came out in 1966.

1. Chance the Rapper "Blessings"

The Chicago MC's new gospel-steeped album, *Coloring Book*, is the year's richest hip-hop LP so far, and "Blessings" gorgeously sums up its message: "I don't make songs for free/ I make 'em for freedom."



2. The Strokes "Oblivius"

The Strokes are back – and not the goofy synth-pop Strokes, either. "Oblivius," from their new three-song EP, has darting, skeletal guitars, desperate over-the-phone vocals, and a chorus that shoots you from the gutter to the stars in seconds.

3. Mudcrutch "Trailer"

A fine, forlorn rocker – off the second LP from Tom Petty's re-formed pre-Heartbreakers band – about love and loss and dancing to Skynyrd in a sad mobile home.

4. Car Seat Headrest "Drunk Drivers/ Killer Whales"

Will Toledo battles his angst and bear-hugs the world. The result: a perfect underdog anthem.



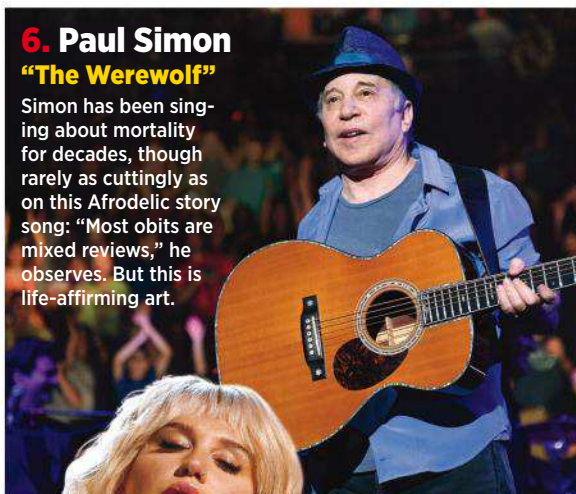
5. Lizzo "Good as Hell"

On this euphoric hip-hop-soul throwback, Minneapolis rapper-singer Lizzo makes a trip to the beauty shop ("Hair tall/Check my nails") sound like the best party in town.



6. Paul Simon "The Werewolf"

Simon has been singing about mortality for decades, though rarely as cuttngly as on this Afrodelic story song: "Most obits are mixed reviews," he observes. But this is life-affirming art.



7. Kesha "It Ain't Me, Babe"

Performing at the *Billboard* Music Awards, amid her legal battle with former producer Dr. Luke, Kesha sang the Dylan classic with stark, somber determination, making it a statement of against-it-all empowerment.



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I have this need to nap, but when I take one, it only buys me a couple of hours. I can't control when I fall asleep. I'm missing things at work, and it's tough to concentrate throughout the day. **WHAT'S GOING ON?**



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Rock & Roll

Dead and Co. Ride Again

Stadium run to include deep tracks and new directions

BY DAVID FRICKE

ONE NIGHT LAST fall, Dead and Company were closing a show with "Brokedown Palace," from 1970's *American Beauty*, when singer-guitarist John Mayer spotted "the real thing," as he puts it: a veteran Deadhead with long white hair, matching beard and a tie-dye shirt. "He was in tears," Mayer recalls. "You could tell he was there on behalf of his youth, the friends he'd lost and what these songs meant to him. I thought, 'This is what I get to do - have this artistic freedom and give some freedom in return. And I get to do it with the guys who were there.'"

SHAKEDOWN STREET

John Mayer and Bob Weir at Madison Square Garden last year

© JAY BLAKESBERG

On June 10th, Dead and Company – formed last year by Dead guitarist Bob Weir and drummers Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart with Mayer, former Allman Brothers Band bassist Oteil Burbridge and longtime Dead associate Jeff Chimenti on keyboards – open their second U.S. tour, in Charlotte, North Carolina. The 24 dates include stadium shows in New York; Boulder, Colorado; and Boston, a solid measure of the band's appeal after Weir, Kreutzmann, Hart and bassist Phil Lesh – the Dead's surviving members – played their last shows together, at Fare Thee Well in Chicago last July.

"We put a bunch of work into it," Weir says of Dead and Company. "We built a band that is fun to play in – and more." In arenas last fall, the group had about 60 classic and deep-track Dead numbers in rotation. It expects to add at least 20 more this summer, including, Weir hopes, "Passenger," from 1977's *Terrapin Station*, and "Weather Report Suite," from 1973's *Wake of the Flood*.

"We need to finish up where 'St. Stephen' goes – there are other sections we didn't have time to get to," Weir says. "And I'd like to work up 'Box of Rain,'" originally sung by Lesh on *American Beauty*. "The vocal register is right in John's wheelhouse."

"You couldn't turn your back on this music," Hart says of the decision to continue touring with the Dead repertoire after Fare Thee Well. "We said, 'This is the last time the four of us will be playing together.' We didn't say we were going to stop playing the music."

Mayer is a latecomer to the Dead phenomenon. An established pop star and, at 38, the youngest member of Dead and Company, he had already made five plat-



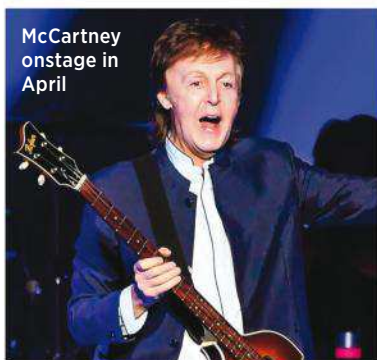
GOIN' DOWN THE ROAD Chimenti, Hart, Weir, Mayer, Burbridge and Kreutzmann (from left) last year

inum solo albums when, about five years ago, he heard "Althea," from 1980's *Go to Heaven*, on Pandora. Mayer was soon obsessed with songs like "Estimated Prophet" and "Playing in the Band," and with "the artisanal ideas, created on the spot" by the Dead's late founding guitarist, Jerry Garcia. In February 2015, Mayer and Weir played together for the first time. Mayer was a guest host of *The Late Late Show*; Weir was the musical guest. Their soundcheck ran so long, Weir says, that the crew "finally unplugged us."

At the time, Weir was "kicking around material" for Fare Thee Well with the guitarist for those shows, Phish's Trey Anastasio. "John is a classicist by nature," Weir says. "Trey is more of an iconoclast." But they are both, Weir notes, "explorers. Juxtaposing Trey's take on the material with the insights John brings got me looking at

the songs afresh." "I knew pretty quickly that he would be great," Kreutzmann says of Mayer. "John has a solidness about him. But he can go 'out' when it's called for."

Weir is looking at Dead and Company as a potential studio entity. "We need to put in another tour, or two," he admits, then suggests an intriguing concept: a mixture of new material with Dead songs never fully addressed in the studio, like "The Other One" and "Dark Star." "That would be something of an adventure," Weir claims. For now, Mayer is eager to be part of a great Dead tradition: the summer tour. "It's 2016, and a lot of things are gone," he says. "But these are the guys from the Dead. You get to hear the music and have the spirit come alive in the summer with your friends. I'm going into this knowing it is going to be an incredible memory." 75



McCartney onstage in April

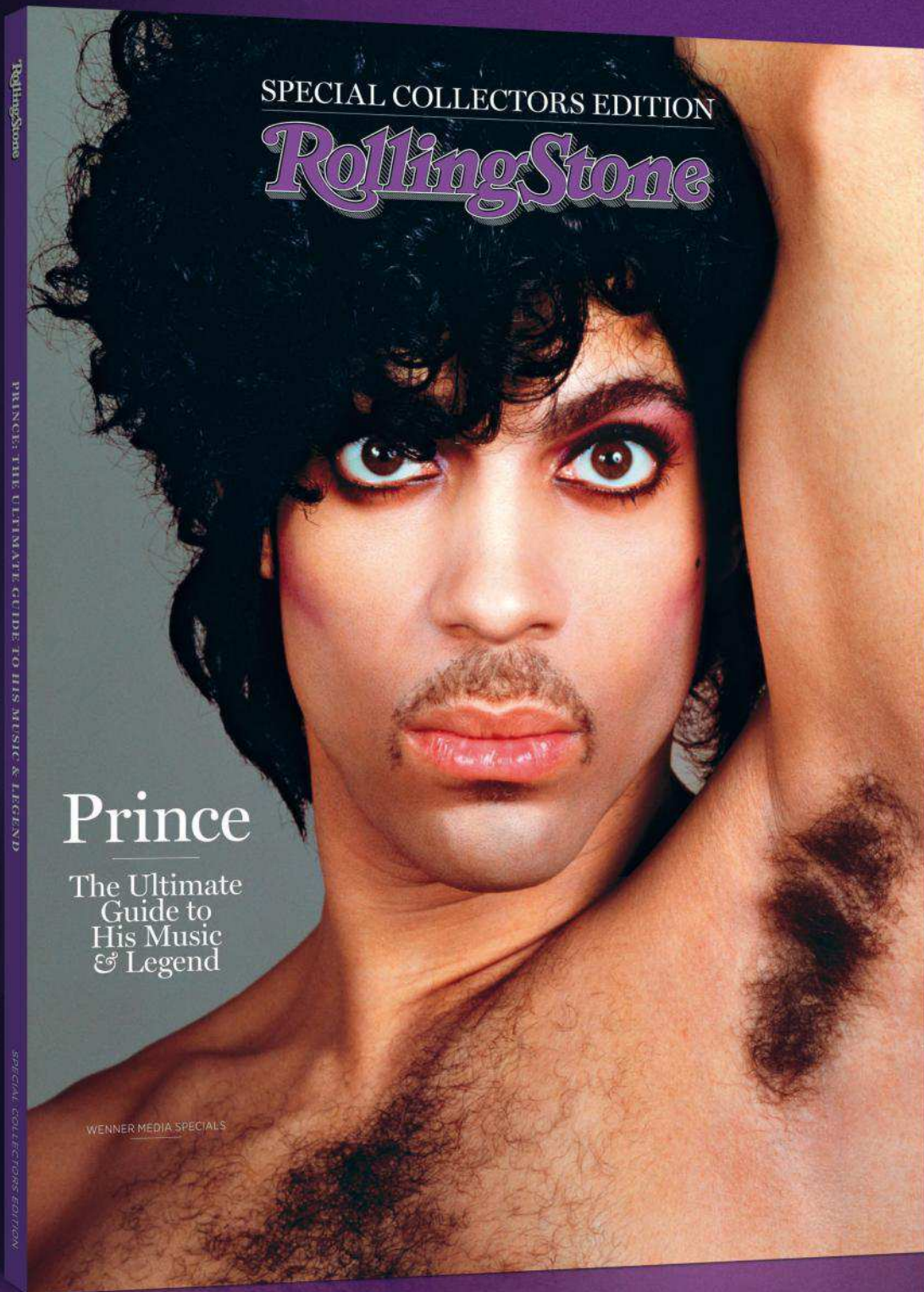
Paul McCartney's Long and Winding Box Set

New collection covers post-Beatles journeys

Paul McCartney was talking recently to a woman who works at his New York office when he got an idea. She was about to embark on a road trip and wanted an extensive playlist of his music. He made one – it will be

released as *Pure McCartney*, out June 10th, a 67-track collection that covers every corner of his post-Beatles catalog, from "Big Barn Bed," a 1973 country rocker, to "Sing the Changes," from his 2008 album with the Fireman. For McCartney, hearing the old songs was a time trip. "Maybe I'm

Amazed" reminded him of the satisfaction he felt recording it after the Beatles' breakup, and "Live and Let Die" evoked his children's youthful days. "My kids said, 'My dad wrote that,' and nobody at school would believe them," he says. "They said, 'No, it's Guns N' Roses!'" STEVE APPLEFORD



ON NEWSSTANDS NOW

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Prophets of Rage Restart the Rap-Rock Revolution

Rage Against the Machine join up with Chuck D and B-Real of Cypress Hill to fight the power once more

BY ANDY GREENE

‘WE’RE NOT A SUPER-group,” says Tom Morello. “We’re an elite task force of revolutionary musicians.” He is describing Prophets of Rage, a new band that brings together members of the guitarist’s old band, Rage Against the Machine, with two of the group’s favorite MCs, Public Enemy’s Chuck D and Cypress Hill’s B-Real.

Fans first learned about Prophets of Rage when mysterious posters started popping up around Los Angeles and a countdown clock was posted on Rage Against the Machine’s Twitter account. Some assumed Rage would be re-forming for the first time since their last show, at the L.A. Coliseum in 2011. That’s not happening – according to drummer Brad Wilk, Rage Against the Machine frontman Zack de la Rocha is working on another project.

As Morello tells it, watching the nightly news at his home in Los Angeles over the past year convinced him that Rage’s music couldn’t sit out yet another tumultuous election season. After getting Rage’s rhythm section – Wilk and bassist Tim Commerford – on board, he started texting with longtime friends Chuck D and B-Real, who quickly agreed to join. “There was a level of camaraderie and purpose,” says Morello. “There’s nothing like playing these songs with Timmy and Brad.” The group made plans for two warm-up club dates at the Whisky a Go Go and the Palladium in Los Angeles. “We are determined to confront this mountain of election-year bullshit,” adds Morello. “And confront it head-on with Marshall stacks blazing.”

The three groups have a long shared history. In the early Nineties, Rage listened to Public Enemy and Cypress Hill tapes in their van constantly while they worked out their sound. “When we started out, no rock bands wanted to take us on the road,” says Wilk, “so we did early tours with both of them.”

“I see them as this generation’s Black Sabbath,” says B-Real about Rage Against the Machine. “It was that heavy to me. In the early 1990s, I was listening to nothing but hip-hop, but they got me back into listening to heavy music.”



NEW RENEGADES Wilk, Chuck D, Morello, Commerford and B-Real (from left). “It’s the hardest, most aggressive sound I’ve ever been associated with,” says Chuck D.

Prophets of Rage quietly started coming together about four months ago at tiny rehearsal spaces around Los Angeles. “It’s the hardest, most aggressive sound I’ve ever been associated with,” says Chuck D of the practice sessions. “It’s relentless power, speed and energy for four hours a day, five or six days a week. I’ve been doing Pilates to get ready.”

Onstage, the band will be pulling from all three groups’ catalogs. While Rage Against the Machine songs will stay close to their original arrangements, Cypress Hill and Public Enemy tunes have undergone what the band calls “Rage-ification.” “‘She Watch Channel Zero’ has become a Rage-Sabbath bulldozer,” says Morello of the Public Enemy song. “And ‘Fight the Power’ has morphed into something that you might not expect.” The group has also worked up a few new songs it might sprinkle into the show.

Morello has had to brush off Rage-reunion questions for years. “It’s stressful,” he says. “Fans are frustrated the music has not been out there.” According to the band, de la Rocha has given the project “his blessing.” “You’re never going to replace him, and we’re not trying to do that,” Commerford says. “We’ve picked people that he looks up to and idolizes to see what they can do with the songs.”

At press time, Prophets of Rage had no plans beyond the booked club dates, but a tour this year is likely. Rumors are flying that the band will play outside the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, like Rage did with a riot-inciting performance at the 2000 Democratic convention. “I enjoy rumors as much as anybody else,” says Morello with a laugh. “The one thing I’ll say is, we’re going to make America rage again. What better place than here? What better time than now?”

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R&R

ARTISTS TO WATCH

Maren Morris' New Nashville

How a Texan who got her start at 11 years old became a pop-loving country star

IT'S A MONDAY MORNING, AND RISING 26-year-old country star Maren Morris is driving through Nashville on her way to rehearsal. In a week, she'll kick off some opening dates for Keith Urban that coincide with the June 3rd release of her major-label debut, *Hero*.

Given that Morris' breakthrough, "My Church," is a booming praise song about the redemptive power of the radio (as presided over by Hank Williams and Johnny Cash), you might expect her to be cruising to some classic country. But she's a woman who doesn't draw boundaries in the music she makes, or listens to, so right now she's blasting Ginuwine's 1996 bump-'n'-grind classic, "Pony." "I'm doing this Nineties night on Tuesday here in Nashville with a bunch of friends, and I'm singing on that song," she says, laughing. "I'm going to learn all the harmonies."

Morris grew up a shy kid in Arlington, Texas, who found her confidence in singing. "I did choir, soccer, some theater," she says. "The only weird thing about my life was that I was playing honky-tonks on the weekends." She started singing in clubs at age 11, released her first independent album at 15, and by 21 had already put in a full decade touring around her home state. But a trip to Nashville to visit fellow Texan Kacey Musgraves suggested a new career path: songwriting.

"She showed me around her publishing office," says Morris. "It opened up this world for me: People go in, Monday through Friday, sit down and write a song. I was like, 'Holy shit, this is the best job ever.'" Morris saved her money and, three years ago, drove a U-Haul to an East Nashville house she'd found on Craigslist.

She scored cuts for Tim McGraw and Kelly Clarkson, but eventually she hit a snag. "I kept getting e-mails back from my publisher: 'These songs are great, but I don't even know who to pitch this to because it's so uniquely you.'"

Last year, she released a five-song EP,



TAKE ME TO CHURCH "I did choir, soccer, some theater, and I was playing honky-tonks on the weekends," says Morris.

and radio play for "My Church" helped fuel more than 2 million streams before she landed a deal with Sony Music Nashville. The pop hooks on *Hero* recall Morris fave Sheryl Crow, and like her friends Musgraves and the Brothers Osborne, she's part of a new wave of Nashville musicians making their moves by doing things their own way. "To turn the radio on and hear so much more diversity, it's so refreshing," she says. "That voice that cuts through what you've been hearing, it's inspiring." **JOE LEVY**

ROBBY KLEIN



Strumbellas' 'Dope' Folk

A failing Canadian band scores a hit by listening to Miley – and Aziz Ansari

IN 2013, FIVE YEARS INTO THEIR career, the Strumbellas decided to embark on their first U.S. tour. It didn't go well. The Canadian six-piece folk-rock band spent six weeks playing to empty bars – including one in a strip mall in Arlington, Texas. “There was one guy dancing and two people playing Xbox while we played,” says frontman Simon Ward. “That was the darkest period. I wanted to quit.”

Ward grew resentful of bands like the Lumineers and Mumford & Sons, who were building platinum success on rootsy sounds similar to his band's own. “I was so frustrated and jealous,” he says. “Now I know why: They had better songs.” For the Strumbellas' third album, *Hope*, Ward studied Top 40 radio – Miley Cyrus, Katy Perry, Taylor

Swift – and emulated their approach to pop dynamics and production. He references Aziz Ansari's Tom Haverford character on *Parks and Recreation*: “Talking about his favorite songs, he said, ‘How many drops, and how dope are the drops?’ That's how we approached the songs.” It worked: “Spirits,” a joyous singalong about wrestling with inner demons, reached Number One on the alternative-rock charts. The success has been life-changing for Ward, who worked as a substitute teacher in the farming town of Lindsay, Ontario, until a few years ago, when he asked his brother for a \$20,000 loan so he could focus on music. “I always thought we'd get discovered by a president of a major label at a farmers market,” he says. “It just never happened.” **PATRICK DOYLE**

A BRITISH HIP-HOP STAR, AS SEEN ON TV

Last year, when Samsung used “Queen's Speech 4,” a freestyle by U.K. rapper-singer Lady Leshurr, in a TV ad, Americans were unknowingly introduced to an exciting new sound: a brash MC delivering a flurry of punchlines, chatty sound effects and pop-culture references in a thick British accent, over a thunderous beat. In fact, Lady Leshurr (Melesha O'Garro, 23) has been a fixture on the U.K. dance-music scene for years, working with artists like Wiley and Tinie



Tempah. In 2011, she had a viral hit with a video parody of a Chris Brown song. That almost led to a deal with Atlantic. But she didn't like the label's idea of

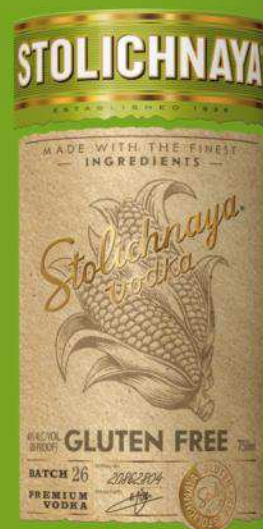
marketing her as a kind of “next Nicki Minaj.” “They thought, ‘Let's mold her and have her dress like this and that,’” she says. “It's always been hard for female rappers to break through in general. I think Nicki Minaj is so influential. It's never been a competition for me.”

Now, Leshurr is defining her sound, mixing the rumbling beats of U.K. grime with hip-hop's “fun and banter.” She has compiled her “Queen's Speech” freestyles on an EP, and her debut album will be out soon. “It was a massive breakthrough,” she says of her unconventional route to getting noticed in America. “Now I've got to capitalize on it.” **MOSI REEVES**

NEW

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THE
VODKA.**



Inside Apple's Megadeals

DRAKE'S "HOTLINE BLING" VIDEO, Taylor Swift's tour movie and the Weeknd's "Can't Feel My Face" have something in common: They've all been funded by Apple.

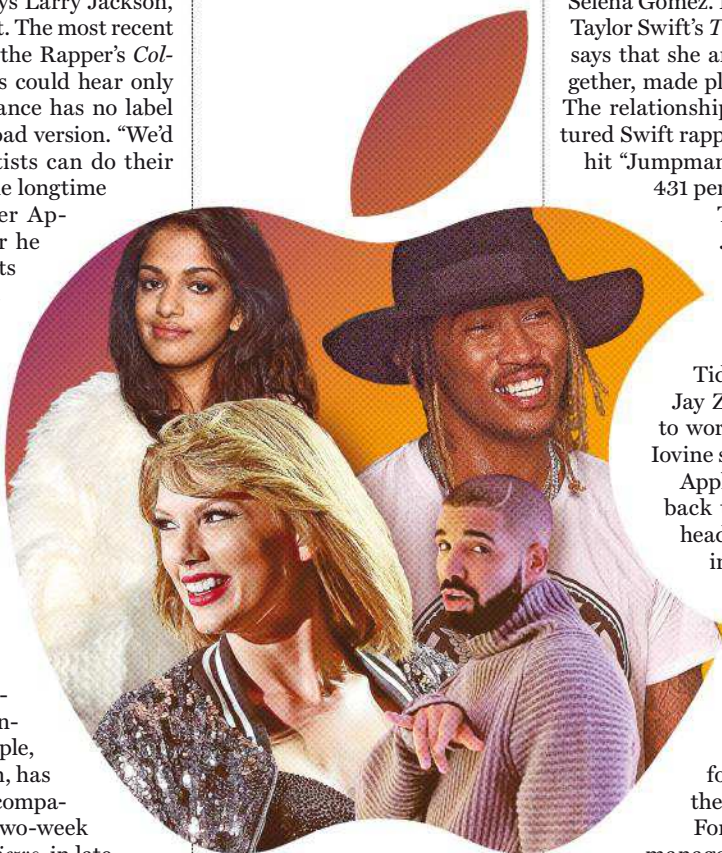
The world's most valuable company has thrown its immense resources into making music videos, concert documentaries and, above all, scoring album exclusives. The tech behemoth's top execs are involved in pop-star projects: Apple CEO Tim Cook had a hand in the production of M.I.A.'s "Borders" video. "Tim weighed in on that one in particular," says Larry Jackson, Apple Music's head of content. The most recent major exclusive was Chance the Rapper's *Coloring Book*, which customers could hear only on Apple Music because Chance has no label and was not selling a download version. "We'd like to be a home where artists can do their thing," says Jimmy Iovine, the longtime record mogul who took over Apple's streaming service after he and partner Dr. Dre sold Beats Electronics to the tech giant for \$3 billion in 2014.

Apple Music is a long way from dominating the music-streaming business, which grew from \$1.4 billion in music revenue in 2013 to nearly \$2.4 billion in 2015. According to reports, Spotify has roughly 30 million paid subscribers to Apple Music's 11 million, and while Jay Z's Tidal has around 3 million, his service has put out high-profile exclusives from Beyoncé, Rihanna and Kanye West. But Apple, worth more than \$586 billion, has something neither of those companies can match: cash. The two-week Apple exclusive for Drake's *Views*, in late April, was part of a reported multimillion-dollar deal that included funding the huge "Hotline Bling" video. The company also paid for two versions (one never released) of the Weeknd's "Can't Feel My Face" video last year. Apple had the exclusive for Future's album *EVOL* in February, launching it with an appearance by Future on DJ Khaled's Beats 1 radio show. "It's a brand that is just undeniable," says DJ Khaled.

"Apple is sexy," says Monte Lipman, head of Republic Records, home to the Weeknd and Ariana Grande. "They are prepared to do things no one has done before. Lately, they've been very clever in coming to us with what we consider groundbreaking opportunities." Jack-

The tech giant is opening its checkbook and getting involved with artists' careers like never before

BY DAVID DRAKE



STAR TIME

Apple has staked M.I.A., Future, Drake and Taylor Swift (clockwise from top left) on various projects.

son says the goal is to put Apple Music "at the intersection of all things relevant in pop culture." The model is "MTV in its Eighties and Nineties heyday. You always felt that Michael Jackson lived there, or Britney Spears, or MC Hammer. How do you emotionally conjure up that feeling for people?"

With Larry Jackson signing deals from his perch at the SoHo House restaurant in Los Angeles, Apple has funded Eminem's "Phenomenal" video and built partnerships with the likes of Keith Richards, the Black Eyed Peas and Selena Gomez. He also cut the deal to produce Taylor Swift's *The 1989 World Tour* film. Swift says that she and Jackson "brainstormed together, made plans together, edited together." The relationship extended to an ad that featured Swift rapping along to the Drake-Future hit "Jumpman." (The song's sales increased 431 percent as a result.)

There have been some misses: Jackson lost a bid to sign Kanye West to a deal for his album *The Life of Pablo*. Iovine says that West pulled out of the talks and gave the album to Tidal, which West co-owns with Jay Z and other stars. "He wanted to work with his friend, in the end," Iovine says. "It's that simple."

Apple's star-focused playbook goes back to Iovine's tactics with Beats headphones, which included signing LeBron James to a promotion deal in exchange for a multimillion-dollar stake in the company. "It certainly worked then – but they're not getting the same kind of publicity on exclusives," says Larry Kenswil, a former UMG digital exec. "So the jury's out."

For now, though, top artists and managers are the beneficiaries. "It's just a partnership to do cool shit," says Anthony Saleh, Future's manager. "It's almost like getting paid to wake up and eat breakfast – you're going to do it anyway."

Lipman admires Apple's "sense of adventure, their aggressiveness." To illustrate that, Jackson likes to repeat a story from Iovine: "There are two buzzards sitting on a wire. One buzzard's sitting up there waiting for something to die; the other buzzard's saying, 'Fuck this waiting-to-die shit, let's go kill something.'"

"That's the philosophy. You just have to go and get it done."

Additional reporting by STEVE KNOPPER

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: PASCAL LE SEGRETAIR/GETTY IMAGES; PRINCE WILLIAMS/WIREIMAGE; MARK METCALFE/GETTY IMAGES



Este, Alana and
Danielle (from left)
with Rechtshaid

Haim Bring It All Back Home

IN EARLY 2015, AFTER ALMOST THREE YEARS OF HEAVY touring, Este, Danielle and Alana Haim returned to where they started: the living room of their parents' Los Angeles home, to begin work on their second album. It's the same space where they wrote Haim's 2013 debut, *Days Are Gone*, which helped earn the trio a Grammy nomination and an opening slot on BFF Taylor Swift's 1989 tour. "We've gone through a lot these last couple of years," says guitarist Danielle. The experience of going back home – "Trying to go back to your normal life, but realizing there is a difference," she says – runs through many of Haim's new songs. It also brought them back to their roots as a band. Unlike *Days Are Gone*, their new music does not heavily incorporate drum ma-

chines and samples. "This time, we came at it from a more organic rock standpoint," says Danielle. "When we play live, we realize that ultimately we're a rock band." Working with producer Ariel Rechtshaid (Beyoncé, No Doubt), Haim have recorded more than a dozen tunes, including the piano-driven "Little of Your Love," and "Nothing's Wrong," a kinetic, harmony-laden anthem that recalls Nineties Shania Twain. They also recorded a handful of songs with producer Rostam Batmanglij, formerly of Vampire Weekend. Though Haim plan to release the LP by early next year, they're not stressing about a deadline. "We make the music we make," says bassist Este. "We're not trying to reinvent the wheel. Right now, it's just about coming together and expressing what we're feeling." **JENNY ELISCU**

STUDIO NOTES

JAKE BUGG GOES IT ALONE ON THIRD ALBUM

Jake Bugg had to put up a fight against his record label, Warner Bros., to write and largely self-produce his third album, *On My One*. "[I said] if I don't have the freedom to express myself, there's no point in me even trying to do it anymore," says Bugg, 22, who worked with Rick Rubin on 2013's rockabilly-inspired *Shangri La*. Bugg won, and his 11-track LP (out June 17th) balances his former bluesy sound with heavy dance grooves



and his first hip-hop song ("Ain't No Rhyme"). Despite his new freedom, Bugg is tiring of the major-label grind: "I don't want to do this forever. It's boring." **DAN HYMAN**

MICHAEL KIWANUKA'S UNHINGED SOUL

British singer Michael Kiwanuka's 2012 debut, *Home Again*, took a folky approach to soul music, inspired by Richie Havens and the Band. For his second LP, *Love & Hate* (out July 15th), he shook up his sound with producer Danger Mouse, crafting songs the producer compares to "Pink Floyd and Isaac Hayes, the kind of stuff I love so much." Case in point: "Cold Little Heart," a psych opus with Kiwanuka shredding like Funkadelic's Eddie



Hazel. "It's the first song, so people will know [the LP is] going to be different," says Kiwanuka. "It's better to go whole-hog and not be so polite." **CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN**

Summer Sound to Go

The new crop of portable Bluetooth speakers will give you great streaming sound wherever you happen to be

BY GREG EMMANUEL



Braven BRV-XXL

\$350 braven.com

This modern boombox has a grab-and-go handle that makes it easy to bring the party outside. It's rugged enough to withstand getting wet (or getting dropped), and the sound is big and loud. But be warned: At 18 pounds, it's pretty heavy.

Cool Feature: The huge rechargeable battery lets you play music for about 14 straight hours, and you can use the USB port to charge devices away from home.

THE
DURABLE
BOOMBOX

Scosche boom BOTTLE+

\$180

scosche.com

The size of a tall-boy beer, this one's destined for the beach bag. It's water- and sand-proof, but not loud enough to irritate fellow sunbathers.

Cool Feature: It fits perfectly in a bike's water-bottle cage.



INDOOR-
OUTDOOR
PARTY MATE

Libratone Zipp Mini

\$249 libratone.com

The Mini can be toted out back for a party, or you can add a second Mini for a multi-speaker indoor Wi-Fi system.

Cool Feature: Place your hand on top of the speaker to quickly "hush" it.



THE WATER-
REPELLENT
BEACH BUD

B&O Beoplay A1

\$249

beoplay.com

The discus-shaped Beoplay produces shockingly deep bass for its small size.

There's no reason not to keep it in your backpack all summer long – it's even dust- and splash-resistant.

Cool Feature: Take a phone call – the A1 has a built-in mic, and speech comes through clearly.

THE
STYLISH
PORTABLE



THE
HOTEL-ROOM
ROCKER

Marshall Stockwell

\$229 marshallheadphones.com

With a case that becomes a stand, the Stockwell can pack up easily and rock (loudly) from a desk or table. It's perfect for travelers.

Cool Feature: The analog dials look really good – and they actually make finding just the right volume easier.

Accessories to Keep the Party Going

Pair these key items with your Bluetooth speaker to make sure the music never stops



Mophie powerstation 2X

Nothing is more of a buzzkill than a Bluetooth speaker with a dead battery. This ultrathin external battery can slip into a pocket and rejuice your devices in a pinch. **\$60;** mophie.com



Karma Go

Tired of sucking down expensive data on your phone while you stream music? This mobile hot spot gives you Wi-Fi anywhere, and best of all, you pay as you go without a contract. From **\$149;** yourkarma.com

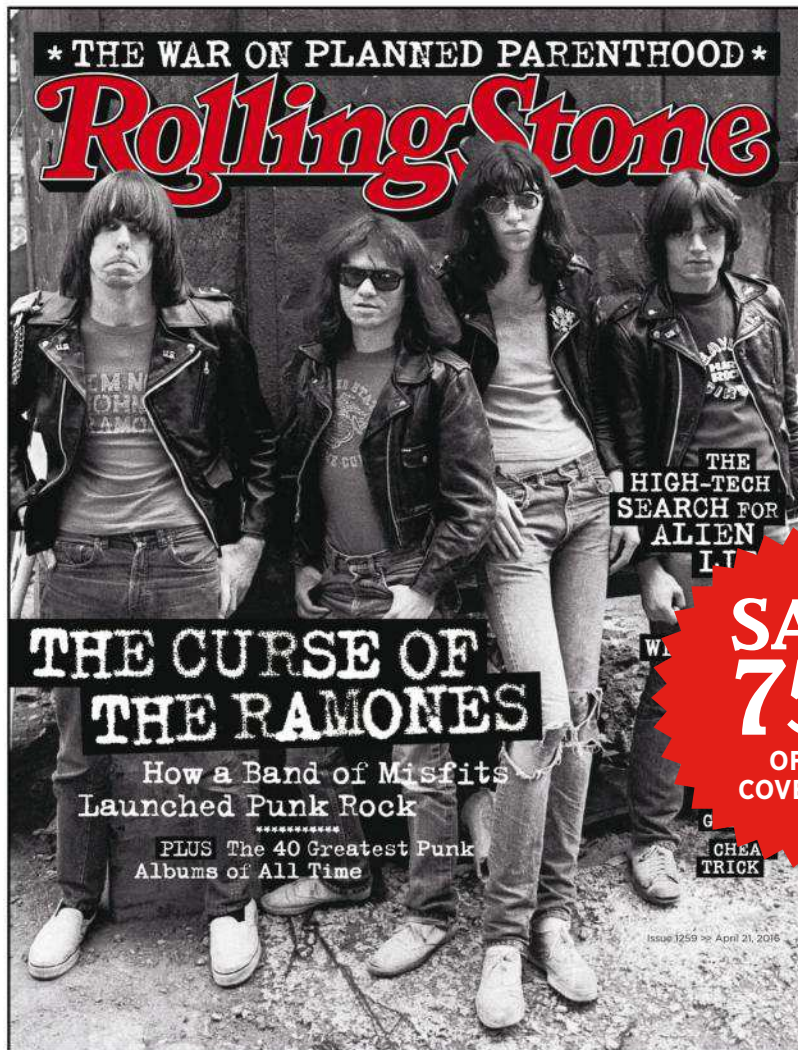


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The Making of a Fake Idol

'Popstar' hilariously skewers the life of a coddled singer – with help from Adam Levine, Max Martin and a Katy Perry magic trick

BY DAVID FEAR

CONNER4REAL, THE BAD-BOY singer played by Andy Samberg in *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping*, isn't real at all. But with his fawning entourage, featherweight R&B-meets-EDM hits and feats of public idiocy (at one point, he passes out on a hoverboard), you might mistake him for a genuine Top 40 star – in particular, a certain Canadian chart-topper.

"Oh, we love Bieber!" Samberg says, as his partners, *Popstar* directors Akiva Schaffer and Jorma Taccone, nod in agreement. "But Conner isn't based solely on him, or anybody specifically." The "popumentary," as the trio call it, was inspired by high-gloss, fan-friendly tour documentaries like *Katy Perry: Part of Me* and *One Direction: This Is Us*. "We watched a lot of those," Samberg says. "We grabbed different elements from everywhere, and then amped them up to an absurd level."

You can see a bit of Macklemore in Conner's earnest gay-rights ode, "Equal Rights" (where he keeps reminding you that he's straight by yelling "titties!" and "Lynyrd Skynyrd!" between verses), and a pinch of Kanye West in his elaborate public proposal to his girlfriend, which ends with Seal getting mauled by wolves. "There's a scene in the Katy Perry movie where she does this cool, kitschy magic trick during her show," Samberg says. "We thought it'd be funny to have Conner do that – because it'd probably go horribly wrong." (Spoiler: It does.)

As the joke-rap trio the Lonely Island, Samberg, Schaffer and Taccone have plenty of experience making hilarious pop music, having released three albums and brought Digital Shorts like "Dick in a Box" and "Shy Ronnie" to *Saturday Night Live*. When it came time to cook up Conner4Real tunes for *Popstar*, Schaffer and Taccone recruited top-shelf producers like RZA and Greg Kurstin, who helped make Adele's "Hello." "We'd say, 'We need a hip-hop song or a slow-jam,' then these incredible beats would show up," says Schaffer. "Occasionally, we'd get this horrible-sounding beat from someone and think, 'Conner would



CLUELESS Samberg as Conner4Real. Some of *Popstar*'s live scenes were shot at a Maroon 5 show. Left: Schaffer, Taccone and Samberg on set.




like this.' That ended up being what we used." He pauses. "I'm not telling you what ones those were."

They even managed to get Max Martin and Justin Timberlake, who guests on the Conner song "Incredible Thoughts." "Max actually recorded Justin's lyrics [for us]," says Taccone. "That's just because they were recording together. That was the only time we could get them: by infiltrating their session."

That still left the problem of staging Conner's elaborate stadium shows, complete with a legion of dancers, pyrotechnics and a DJ (played by Taccone) with a gigantic Deadmau5-style headpiece. Thankfully,

the Lonely Island have friends and fans in high places. "Because we're making the movie with Sony, we were able to use actual crowd footage from the One Direction movie," Schaffer says. "We were also able to get a few minutes onstage before a Maroon 5 concert and film Andy walking around in slow-mo before this huge crowd."

"It was us going, 'Could you 20,000 people out there help us out real quick?'" Samberg says in a whiny voice. Adam Levine let them use a hologram of him literally humping himself during one performance scene. "The man is a saint," Samberg says. "He says he's already seen the film three times! My wife [Joanna Newsom] is a musician. I told her, 'We just wanted to make something that bands watch on tour buses.'" 

GLEN WILSON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES 2

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from MC Hammer's juicy raindance.



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DOWN TIME

With road manager Victor Maymudes and unidentified spectators, Woodstock, 1964. Below: In Queens, 1965.

A Dylan Photographer's Back Pages

PHOTOGRAPHER DANIEL KRAMER had barely heard of Bob Dylan when he was booked to shoot the singer at a studio in Woodstock one day in 1964. "I was only supposed to have an hour with him, but I ended up shooting for five," Kramer remembers. "A few weeks later, I brought the prints to his management office. Bob walked around the table where I laid the prints out, then looked at me and said, 'I'm going to Philadelphia this week. Would you like to come?'"

Dylan loved Kramer's work enough that, between August 1964 and August 1965, the photographer shot the young folk singer about 30 different times, playing a big role in shaping our image of the budding superstar. Kramer's most famous shots appear on the covers of Dylan's twin masterpieces from 1965 – *Bringing It All Back Home* and *Highway 61 Revisited* – but some of the best are candid and quiet: Dylan backstage with Joan Baez, goofing around in Manhattan with his buddies, playing chess in Woodstock.



Now, Kramer has assembled a new book, *A Year and a Day*, which mixes many of his most iconic images with unseen photographs from his vast archives. Some of the most interesting of the previously unpublished shots show Dylan reinventing his sound, recording his first electric music at the sessions for *Bringing It All Back Home* in 1965. "People always say that Dylan went electric at Newport in the summer of 1965," says Kramer. "Well, not to me he didn't. I saw him go electric that January while it was still snowing. It was incredible the first time 'Maggie's Farm' came out over the speakers. Very exciting."

A Year and a Day is almost 300 pages long, but Kramer says he still has many Dylan photographs that nobody has ever seen – and it well might stay that way forever. "You have to take 10 pictures to get one good one," Kramer says. "The rest is snapshots, junk. They're repetitive. Many I haven't even scanned. There will probably always be other pictures."

ANDY GREENE

Remembering a Journalist Who Saw the Power of Rock

Two new books collect the work of pioneering music writer Ralph Gleason

In 1967, Ralph J. Gleason was a 50-year-old jazzhead and columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* when he wrote an essay titled "Like a Rolling Stone." It declared that to understand "the reality of what's happening today in America, we must go to rock 'n roll, to popular music." Forging over \$2,000 to a college dropout named Jann Wenner, he co-founded a magazine with a name inspired by that essay – the magazine you are reading right now.

Always fiddling with his signature pipe and rocking a handlebar mustache, Gleason was a character: He would often be seen sipping from



glasses of milk in nightclubs (he was diabetic and didn't drink). As a writer, he used his platform for social critique, frequently on the persistence of American racism.

Two new books, assembled by his son, Toby, and published by Yale University Press, are fresh and defining anthologies of the writer (who died of a heart attack in 1975). *Music in the Air: The Selected Writings of Ralph J. Gleason* includes an early take on the Beatles, and "We've Got to Get Rid of Nixon" – a 1972 editorial column that no doubt helped secure Gleason's place on the president's infamous "Enemies List."

Conversations in Jazz collects transcripts of chats about his first music love. Most interviews took place between 1959 and 1961 in Gleason's Berkeley living room, and involved some of jazz's greatest figures: John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, Sonny Rollins and a young Quincy Jones. Gleason saw the music, like rock, as an expression of our highest selves. "There were political and sociocultural threads in his work – he did not write in a vacuum," says Toby. "He was a sharp cat."

WILL HERMES

FROM LEFT: © DANIEL KRAMER/COURTESY OF TASCHEN; 2: BARON WOLMAN/ICONIC IMAGES



haveKINDLE willTRAVEL

📍 TONLE BATI, CAMBODIA 📖 V. RATNER, *IN THE SHADOW OF THE BANYAN* @AMAZONKINDLE



amazon

LAST YEAR, BLAKE SHELTON's four-year marriage to Miranda Lambert fell apart, and the saga turned the country star into a tabloid fixture. "I had to piece my life back together," he says. But happiness turned out to be just two chairs over on the set of *The Voice*. Shelton bonded with fellow coach Gwen Stefani, who was going through a divorce of her own, and the two started dating. "If you had told me that that's who I'm gonna end up with, I would have thought you were crazy," he says. "But she became my closest ally." Shelton chronicles his road back from heartache on his new album, *If I'm Honest*, which features a duet with Stefani, "Go Ahead and Break My Heart." "We realized that we were both having a hard time letting our guard down," Shelton says. "But I sent a voice memo to her, and then she sent back her verse to me. We wrote it communicating to each other. And that's why it's so special to the both of us."

When you're not shooting *The Voice* or on tour, you're in Oklahoma. What's your life like there?

Unless it's raining, I'm hunting or fishing or farming. I'm going crazy right now because I put corn in about three weeks ago and I haven't been back to look at it. Sometimes I'll go hunting for caribou in Canada, or elk hunting. But bowhunting white-tailed deer in Oklahoma is my favorite thing. **Do you ever take Gwen hunting?**

I know you know better than that. [*Stefani is an animal-rights advocate.*] I can just see her: "Get 'im!" That makes me laugh.

Like your album, Beyoncé's *Lemonade* deals with a relationship falling apart. Have you checked it out?

I watched the movie, and it blew me away. One lyric really hit me: "Who the fuck do you think I is?/You ain't married to no average bitch." Whoa! That's not a marketing stunt. I can't believe that's anything other than true. **You're famous for your partying. What's your key to throwing a good one?**

I really don't throw a lot of parties, though it damn sure looks that way if you listen to the media. But you just gotta have great music: classic stuff everybody knows that you don't gotta think too hard about. And I'm not talking about any of that dance-club music. **I take it you're not an EDM fan.**

I don't even know who that is. **What rock music did you love growing up?**

Ted Nugent and Bob Seger. When I got older, I got into Guns N' Roses

Q&A



Blake Shelton

The 'Voice' star on how he got together with Gwen Stefani, Beyoncé's 'Lemonade,' Guns N' Roses, and why tabloids don't faze him anymore

BY PATRICK DOYLE

and AC/DC. I saw some GN'R footage from Coachella. Axl sounds as good as ever. If I went to the concert where he's singing for AC/DC, I'd probably have a seizure.

You're still a country dude at heart, but you also live in L.A. You recently attacked a Twitter troll who accused you of "going Hollywood."

Some people are just so stupid. If I've gone Hollywood, then AC/DC has gone country. It's that stupid of a statement. I feel like I'm doing this guy a favor by pointing it out to him.

Do you ever worry about being seen as a television personality rather than as an artist?

My job at *The Voice* is to represent country music. I take that very seriously. So many hit songs have been launched from this show, and so many songs have been discovered. It's bringing music into 13 million people's living rooms. There's nothing but fuckin' awesomeness that comes out of that. That said, I wish to God the show was taped in Nashville. I'd be 200 times happier. **What have you learned about your *Voice* co-host Adam Levine over the years?**

Adam is a 14-year-old boy trapped in a 30-whatever-he-is body. And that includes his attention span. This week, he's all fired up about houses he might buy: "Hey, dude, look at this one, check this one out." It's just like, "Oh, my God, man. I know you're not going to buy any of these." When he gets on something, you need to take a Tylenol and get ready, because that's what you're gonna hear about for the next month. Before this, it was golf.


You've gotten into a few scrapes on Twitter. What does your drafts folder look like?

More than ever, I've been hitting "delete" before I send out a tweet. I'm just tired of the drama that comes with it, the absolute crybaby reaction you get from how politically correct the world is now. Everybody needs to take a chill pill.

Trump makes a big argument that political correctness has gotten out of hand.

I feel like it has. The best way to deal with that, I think, is just sometimes to keep my mouth shut.

It seems like you, Miranda and Gwen are on the cover of every tabloid these days. What's that like?

It used to upset me, but it turns out it just pays really well. They can't let go of anything I do. I literally was followed to work today. It must mean my career is doing pretty well, because my personal life's not that exciting. I don't do that much. I'm kind of a slug. But they damn sure want pictures of it. 

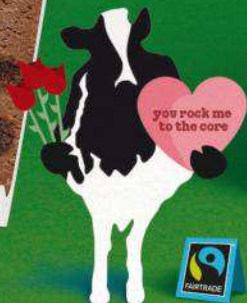
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The Hot Season

Danny McBride goes back to school, 'Orange Is the New Black' returns, gritty noir from Richard Price, plus Ellen Barkin's thug life and much more

BY ROB SHEFFIELD



VICE SQUAD
McBride and
Goggins

Vice Principals

HBO, July 17th

For most people, high school is a four-year sentence. For Neal Gamby, it's the hellhole he's dug himself into for life – and the only thing that keeps him going is the dream that someday he'll run the place. He's the most pitiful high school teacher you've ever seen – especially since he's Danny McBride, who makes Gamby a comic creation worthy of Kenny Powers, the slob he played to mulleted perfection on *Eastbound & Down*. McBride makes *Vice Principals* the summer's best new comedy – he's a bundle of sweaty midlife despair, a petty tyrant seething in his sad blue school-spirit sweater vest.

As *Vice Principals* begins, the retiring principal of a South Carolina high school leads his two deputies in one final Pledge of Allegiance

while they flip each other off behind his back. (The principal who's stepping down? Bill Murray, in a genius cameo.) Gamby's archrival for the number-one job is Walton Goggins, from *Justified*, as a horrifying, smarmy bow-tie dandy. Both vice principals battle it out for the top spot, but to their shock, they get passed over in favor of a new principal, who adds insult to injury by ordering Gamby to get up early every morning to teach driver's ed in the parking lot. Driver's ed? This means war.

McBride is just amazing – at least Kenny Powers always had his clueless-asshole swagger to carry him through, but Gamby is a darker character who can smell the stench of loser dust all over him. McBride never stops adding to his own humiliations. His idea of helping to mold the minds of the future is to warn

newly privatized penitentiary gets more overcrowded, tensions are on the rise. Joe Caputo (Nick Sandow) takes over as the new warden, but he's in over his head. "A hundred new inmates!" he fumes. "I got Inmate-palooza here! I am drowning in a sea of orange!" The crowded cellblocks bring new problems, from snoring to

his students, "You know what happens to kids your age if you smoke too much marijuana? You grow tits! Giant turkey tits, down to your knees!"

Orange Is the New Black

Netflix, June 17th

The inmates of Litchfield are back after Season Three's cliffhanger finale, and as the

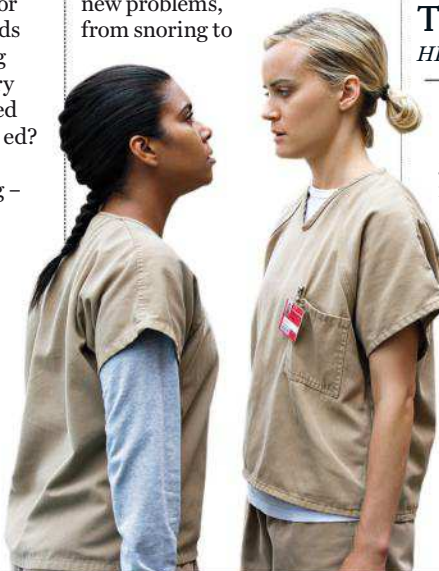
skinheads to slap-happy new guards. The ethnic conflicts heat up, as the Dominican prisoners square off against the Puerto Ricans. ("Dumb-in-a-can." "Fuck you, Bacardi bitches!") Taylor Schilling's Piper is relishing her new role at the top of the prisoner hierarchy, now that she's set up her lucrative sideline of pimping used underwear – "I am the prison-pussy panty business!" – but that just makes her a bigger target for anyone who wants to take her down. And since she can't stop saying shit like "I'm gangsta, like with an 'a' at the end," that means pretty much everybody. Blair Brown raises hell as everybody's favorite new inmate, a celebrity cooking guru, but OGs like Kate Mulgrew, Uzo Aduba, Jessica Pimentel and Samira Wiley continue to amaze – no other show has so many brilliant actors going so deep on such unforgettable characters, with backstories that can break your heart.

The Night Of

HBO, July 10th

Like so many New York crime stories, this one begins with a nice guy who never did anything crazy in his life before tonight – which is when things get bloody. A mild-mannered Pakistani-American college kid from Queens borrows his dad's cab to go to a party, but his outing takes a horrific turn

BIG BIRD CAGE Pimentel (left) and Schilling face off in *Orange Is the New Black*.





NYC NOIR
Riz Ahmed is on trial for murder in *The Night Of*.

after he picks up a passenger, a mystery girl who lures him into bed. Fade to black – until he wakes up and finds her dead body. Did he kill her? Or is somebody setting him up? *The Night Of*, written by Steven Zaillian and noir mastermind Richard Price, gets its tension from the two hard-boiled cranks playing mind games over this case. John Turturro is fantastically scuzzy as the ambulance-chasing defense attorney. Bill Camp is the equally rumpled and manic detective convinced he's got this kid red-handed – both these guys make Columbo look like James Bond.

Feed the Beast

AMC, June 5th

The Schwimmer-saince just keeps rolling. Fresh from his career-peak star turn as the Kardashian patriarch on *The People v. O.J. Simpson*, David Schwimmer returns with a gritty, mobbed-up restaurant story. On *Feed the Beast*, he's a widower who calls himself "a sommelier, but I'm between restaurants," which is a fancy way of saying he's got a vicious drinking problem. His life fell apart last year when his wife got killed



FOOD PORN
Schwimmer's bad chef

and his traumatized young son stopped speaking. His coked-up friend Dion (Jim Sturgess) is just out of jail and has a crazy scheme: Fight their way back into the cutthroat restaurant world, start up a new joint in their own neighborhood. ("The Bronx is the new Brooklyn," Dion says hopefully.) *Feed the Beast* is part food porn, part crime drama, with a surprisingly thick sense of grief.

Stranger Things

Netflix, July 15th

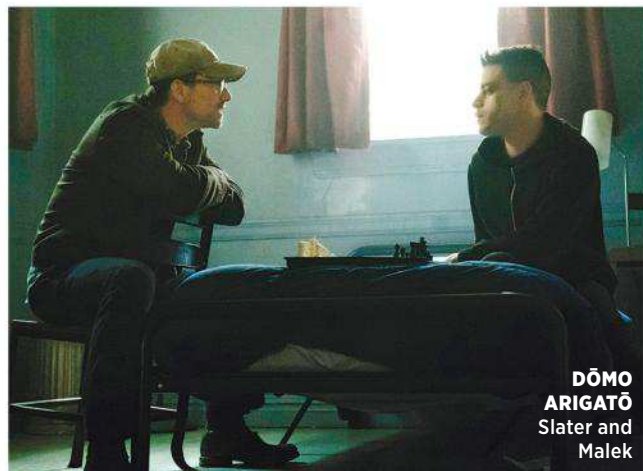
1983: A small-town Indiana comics-geek kid vanishes without a trace. His working-stiff mom, Winona Ryder, goes looking for answers, except she starts to suspect he's caught up in a sinister government conspiracy involving some deadly adults (one of them Matthew Modine). *Stranger Things* is an affectionate ode to Eighties geek culture – the missing kid's friends try to solve the mystery, using their walkie-talkies to speak in their shared language of references to *Lord of the Rings*, *Dungeons and Dragons* and Issue 134 of *The X-Men*. But the mystery deepens when they meet a weird little girl with a shaved head and some supernatural secrets.

Animal Kingdom

TNT, June 14th

Ellen Barkin might not seem like your first pick to play a redneck bank-robbing thug-life queen. But she really brings it in *Animal Kingdom*, which

could have been called *Mom of Anarchy*. A confused California kid goes to live with his grandma after his mother dies of a heroin overdose. He quickly discovers that Grandma's running her own crime family, commanding his heavily armed surf-trash uncles. Barkin is sublimely creepy –



DÔMO
ARIGATÔ
Slater and Malek

she keeps her sons under her thumb by playing quasi-sexual head games with them. She's in the great tradition of Angie Dickinson in the exploitation classic *Big Bad Mama*.

Roadies

Showtime, June 26th

Cameron Crowe created this tale of noble roadies, based on the rock & roll travails he's been chronicling ever since he spent the Seventies profiling the Eagles and the Allman Brothers for *Rolling Stone*. Luke Wilson plays the tour manager of an arena-rock group with the very 1974 name the Staton-House Band. Carla Gugino is the perky head of production, and Luis Guzmán the philosopher bus driver. This is Crowe's home turf, and he captures the boredom, banter and mania of life on the run.



BACKSTAGE PASS
Imogen Poots on *Roadies*

Mr. Robot

USA, July 13th

Last year's best new show came out of nowhere – well, out of the USA Network, which is basically the same thing. Rami Malek returns as

Elliot, a hacker kid recruited into an underground Coney Island cell of vigilante anarchists who call themselves "fsociety," dedicated to corporate sabotage. The hotly anticipated second chapter picks up where we left off, after the fsociety hack throws the world economy into chaos. Christian Slater returns as Mr. Robot, who plays a murky role in Elliot's unstable and drug-riddled brain – as he says, it's "an infinite loop of insanity." Sam Esmail's visually splendid and outrageously imaginative punk fantasy doesn't rest on its laurels – the second season adds newcomers like Craig Robinson, Frances Ha's Grace Gummer, and rapper Joey Bada\$\$, while B.D. Wong expands the intriguing role of trans hacker Whitmore, leader of the Dark Army. And in a typically inventive special-effects trick, there's a clever cameo by some guy named Barack Obama.

The New Master of Horror

The 'Walking Dead' creator on his new show, how to handle the apocalypse, and witnessing a real-life exorcism as a child

BY DAVID FEAR

FOR SIX SEASONS, Robert Kirkman, the writer and executive producer of AMC's hit show *The Walking Dead*, has turned the pages of his black-and-white comic book into a "zombie movie that never ends" juggernaut. The show not only spawned a Los Angeles-based spinoff (*Fear the Walking Dead*) but also a hit in which people discuss episodes immediately after they air (*Talking Dead*). Every time a major character dies, which is often, Twitter practically bursts into flames. The comic, now in its 155th issue, has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide and been translated into more than 30 languages. Cosplayers dress up as *Dead* heroes, villains and ghouls, and reportedly at least one Comic-Con attendee dressed as a zombie version of Kirkman himself.

In a conference room overlooking a part of L.A. that *Fear* once engulfed in post-apocalyptic fire, the 37-year-old Kirkman smiles beneath a buzz cut and a bushy beard, alternating between warmth and wariness. "You going to say I have a 'bulky physique' like the last guy?" he jokes, referring to a 2013 *ROLLING STONE* story that included a comparison to *The Simpsons'* Comic Book Guy. He is now bringing another comic, the supernatural thriller *Outcast*, to Cinemax with the hope of doing for demonic possession what his breakout work did for zombies. Centered on a small-town kid battling an evil-spirit epidemic, it's a mix of religious horror and rural dread — *The Exorcist* crossed with Grant Wood's "American Gothic."



Despite the many projects, rabid fan base and no longer having "12 credit cards' worth of debt," Kirkman still has a conflicted relationship with success. "Look, I live extremely comfortably now," he says, "more than I have a right to." He used to worry that he would never make it, and then that he had peaked too soon. "It used to haunt me that this thing I came up with when I was 23 years old would define me," he says. "My tombstone will say, 'Here lies the idiot who made *The Walking Dead*.' But, hey, there are worse things. I'm OK with that now."

What do you remember about growing up in Kentucky?

My dad was a sheet-metal fabricator and an entrepreneur, and I have a distinct memory of being in my dad's truck, saying to him, "Your job seems so hard."

He said, "That's what you do when you're an adult. You get up every morning and go to work." I was like, "Really? This sucks!" [Laughs]

When did the idea that the dead might walk among us come across your radar?

I wasn't allowed to watch horror movies as a kid, so there was always a fascination with them. One night, there was some local Fox affiliate that happened to be showing *Night of the Living Dead*. I remember thinking, "This is crazy. There are people trapped in this house and zombies are trying to get in." I'd heard George Romero had made sequels. I must have watched them every night for months.

Did it surprise you when TV became interested in the comic?

It was all fairy dust to me. I was in Kentucky when somebody told me Frank Darabont

was interested in doing *The Walking Dead* as a TV show. I was like, "Um, who's Frank Darabont? What's *The Shawshank Redemption*? Never seen it." I had to go watch the movie, at which point I was like, "Oh, he gets it. This isn't about the prison, it's about these two guys and their emotions."

And then you stepped through the looking-glass.

It's weird, you go from doing this comic book with your best friend, and then you're standing on a set where there are burned-out cars and wrecked helicopters. There are people in zombie makeup everywhere, and Frank Darabont is firing a gun instead of saying "Action" while you watch a scene of a little girl being killed. I mean, somebody turned this thing into a movable Disneyland, and I got to visit it? It's fucking surreal.

What about when it became a pop-culture phenomenon?

I piss people off sometimes because I'm not very excitable. I knew we were one bad news story away from zombies never making it to TV. After the pilot aired, [AMC programming head] Joel Stillerman called me and told me that something like 5.3 million people had watched it, and my response was, "Cool. So is that good?" [Laughs] I don't know how many people watch TV. You're an executive producer on the show....

Yeah, but I didn't struggle in TV. I don't know what the normal experience feels like, and that sometimes bums me out. I know that I would be having a better time and I would be appreciating it more if I had any kind of concept of what it's like to actually do all the work that goes in a TV show and then have the world go, "How about 'fuck you'?" Maybe *Outcast* will give me that [laughs].

Why do you think a zombie show hit such a nerve with mainstream culture?

It's the global economic crisis, income inequality, the post-9/11 world. Everyone is scared shitless. It's not the worst time ever to be alive, but, you know, it's tough out there. I feel like if you worry every day about being able to buy groceries and then you go home and watch a guy get chased by zombies – it's like, well, could be worse. Listen, if I could wave a magic wand and make the world a better place and make *Walking Dead* less successful, I would wave it without hesitation. I feel like I'm a misery profiteer sometimes. People were pretty up in arms over the season finale....

We knew that people might be upset – but come on! Everybody wants to see what happened. That's what a cliffhanger is. I'll probably get crucified for this. I feel like there's a culture of instant gratification now: Netflix, social media, everything is on demand at all times. Nothing is withheld. You can't do 52 ep-



Years of the Living Dead

(1) Michael Traynor (left) and Steven Yeun in *The Walking Dead*. (2) The cover of the first issue of *Outcast*, June 2014. (3) Gabriel Bateman (top) and Patrick Fugit in the premiere of Cinemax's adaptation of *Outcast*.

isodes a year. It's just not possible. If you can do something that has people talking about your show in that gap between seasons, that's great. If you've enjoyed the show so far, just know: Season Seven is going to be pretty great. You had a legal battle with the comic's original artist, Tony Moore, in 2012, when he claimed he was cheated out of profits. Are you guys on speaking terms?

He just did a cover for issue No. 150, so, yeah, from time to time. He has his take on the matter, I have mine. I guess we just agree to disagree for the rest of our lives. It's a bit-tersweet thing. When we started [publishing] *Walking Dead*, I knew there was a very good chance that I would have to replace him, and I didn't want to do that. I remember there was a point where I was

screaming at him, "We could be making \$50,000 a year each on this book if things keep going this way. Are you crazy?" At that point, I was still tens of thousands of dollars in debt from self-publishing. When *Walking Dead* took off, I would have chained Tony to that table to make sure we were able to do this. And, yeah, he didn't want to be chained to that table. The show has become increasingly bleak – how much of it reflects your view of humanity?

I try not to be a glass-half-empty kind of guy. But I do feel like if society were to crumble, we would all be killing each other for resources. It's terrifying what a human will do to survive, you know? Monsters are real, and they are us. Once I had kids, I remember thinking, "Yeah, if that guy tried to kill my kid, I would rip his

head off. Though who knows? [Pauses] We all like to think we're Liam Neesons, but most of us are George Costanzas. Do you have an endgame for *Dead* in mind?


For the books? I do. I know how the story wraps up. The big question is when and how far in the distance that is. There's still plenty of story for the TV series. You could tell the writers where you're going....

I would never do that. That's the one thing I'm disappointed in George R.R. Martin for doing. He should have just been like, "Fuck you. You make it up now. I'll get to mine when I'm ready." You've said you're not religious, but *Outcast* seems heavily influenced by it.

My mom went to a Pentecostal church for a number of months, maybe years – people speaking in tongues and all that. My mom would be like, "I don't want you to go to hell, so we're going to church."

But where did the idea of doing a series on possession come from?

Look...all right, fine. I witnessed an exorcism while I was at that church. I don't like talking about it. This person was spitting and biting and growling and all kinds of crazy stuff. I don't remember being scared. It seemed almost normal to me. I wouldn't say it messed with my mind. It was an interesting thing. I witnessed an exorcism. Like zombies, it's a rich metaphor for exploring some bigger ideas.

It's terrifying to think there could be a thing out there that could go inside of you and make you not you. That's something that we all deal with, to a certain extent. I think back to how I was as a 19-year-old, and how all my life experiences have changed who I am – and if I met him, I don't know if we'd get along. He's probably an asshole. 

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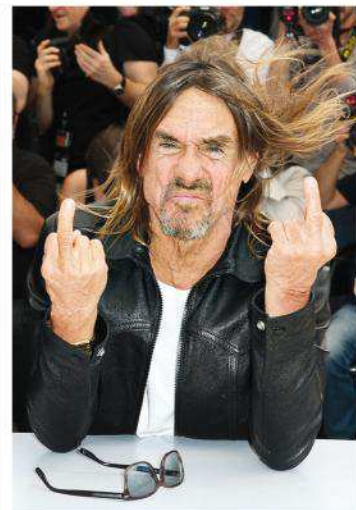
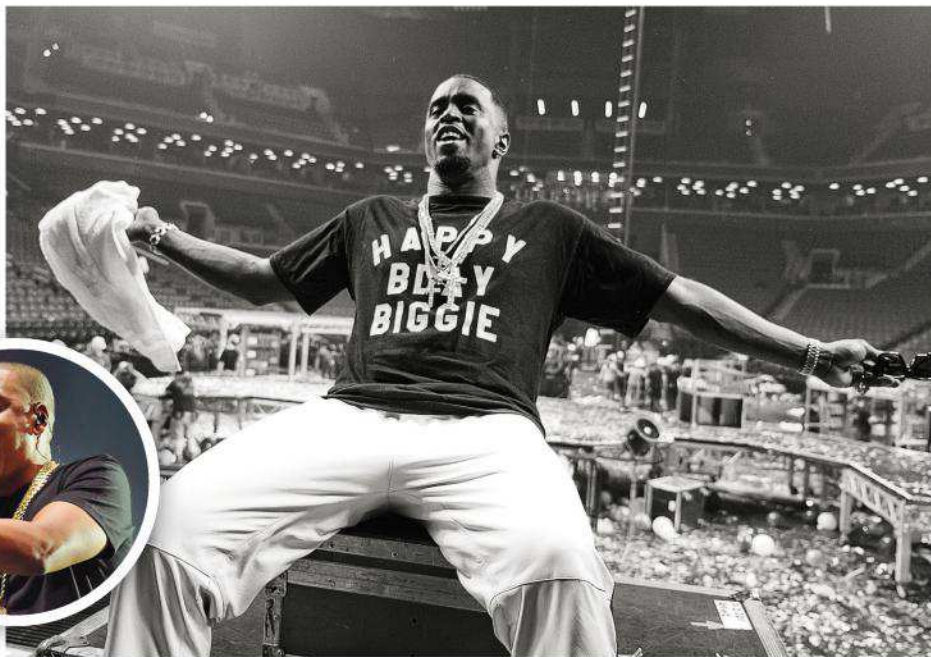


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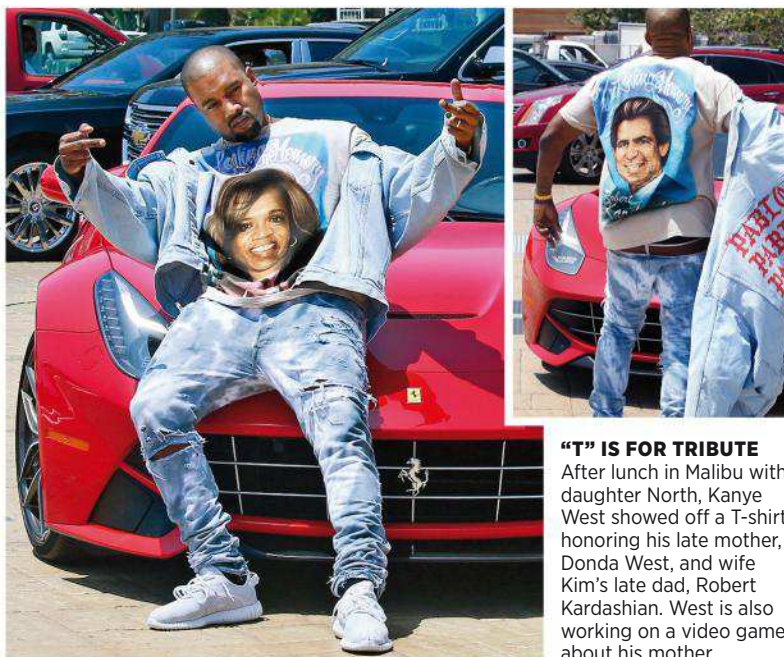
RandomNotes



DOCUMENT THIS! Iggy Pop stormed the Cannes Film Festival for the premiere of the new Jim Jarmusch-directed Stooges doc, *Gimme Danger*. "I was on acid in more than several of the clips," recalled a nostalgic Iggy.

Bad Boy: Still Juicy!

Puff Daddy and an army of Nineties hip-hop superstars – from Lil' Kim to Jay Z – celebrated Notorious B.I.G.'s birthday at Brooklyn's Barclays Center, just blocks from where Biggie grew up. "God is at work," said Diddy, who is also going on tour with Bad Boy vets this summer. "We are the biggest family force in music-industry history."



"T" IS FOR TRIBUTE

After lunch in Malibu with daughter North, Kanye West showed off a T-shirt honoring his late mother, Donda West, and wife Kim's late dad, Robert Kardashian. West is also working on a video game about his mother.



STADIUM SLAYER

Beyoncé played a 33-song set – which included her walking on water and changing costumes nine times – at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES FOR LIVE NATION; JUSTIN JAY VISUAL/PICTUREPERFECT; FRANK MICELOTTA/INVISION FOR PARKWOOD ENTERTAINMENT/AP IMAGES; RM/BJ/AM-GSI; BRUCE JAVILES/FAMELYNET PICTURES



Songs in the Key of Purple

Madonna honored late friend Prince at the *Billboard* Music Awards with a hits medley that included a duet with Stevie Wonder on "Purple Rain." After her performance got some online flak, she told critics to "deal with it." Wonder agrees: "There can never be too many tributes to a man who changed the face of music," he says.



All Hail Barack-lemore!

Barack Obama has invited some talented rappers to the White House this year, from Kendrick Lamar to Lin-Manuel Miranda. Macklemore joined the club when he conducted a "very candid" interview with the president for an upcoming documentary about opioid addiction. "I take this personally," said Macklemore. (No word on whether Ryan Lewis got to meet Joe Biden.)

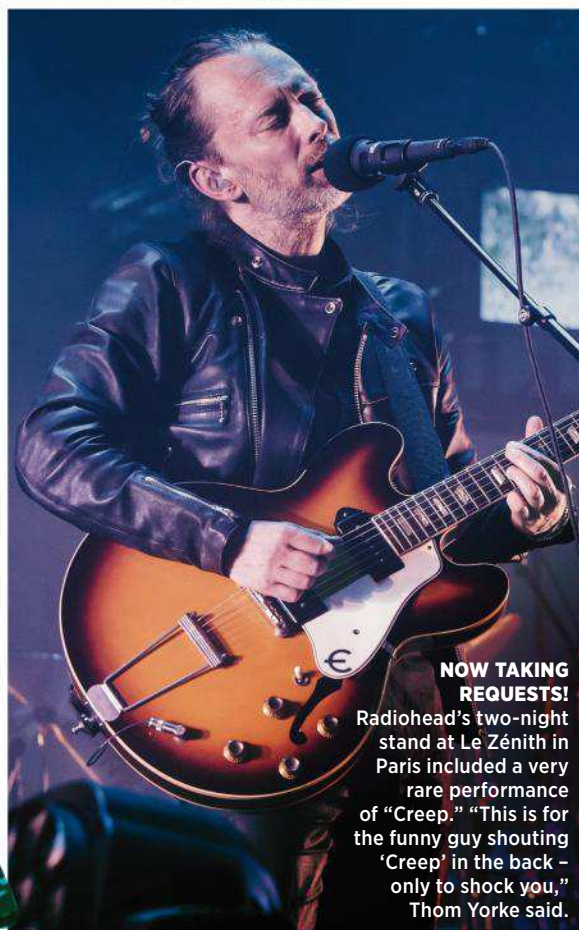
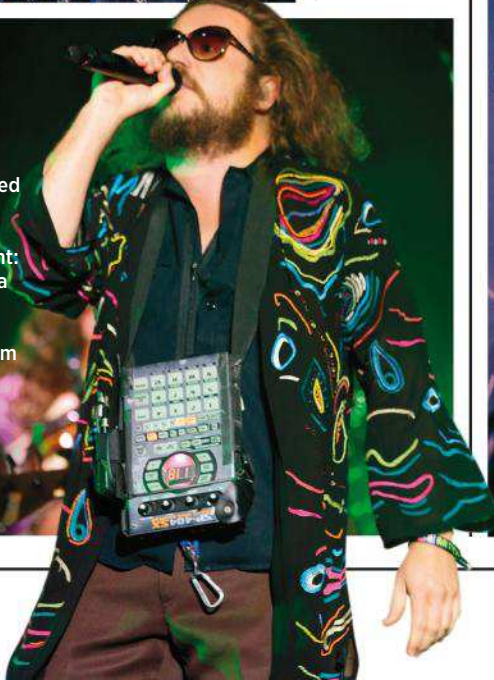


MAYBE HE'S AMAZED

Paul McCartney invited a 10-year-old fan onstage in Buenos Aires to give her an autograph, but she wound up playing his bass part on "Get Back." "I didn't see this coming!" Paul said. "Muchas gracias!"

One Hot Jacket

My Morning Jacket pulled out all the stops at the Shaky Knees festival in Atlanta (it was only right: the fest is named after a lyric from their 2003 song "Steam Engine"). The set peaked when Jim James rocked his signature glowing sampler on "Victory Dance." "It's always a thrill to get down in Hotlanta," says James.



NOW TAKING REQUESTS!

Radiohead's two-night stand at Le Zénith in Paris included a very rare performance of "Creep." "This is for the funny guy shouting 'Creep' in the back - only to shock you," Thom Yorke said.



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Hamilton



NATIONAL PRIDE

"This is how I always saw the Founding Fathers," Miranda says. From left: Soo, Miranda, Jackson, Diggs, Renée Elise Goldsberry, Odom.



Mania

★

Creator Lin-Manuel
Miranda and cast on how
a Revolutionary hip-hop
musical became the
cultural event of our time

By Mark Binelli

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK SELIGER

ROLLING STONE

37

“S

O YOU want the *Birdman* tour?” Lin-Manuel Miranda asks with a grin. It’s a sleepy Monday afternoon at the Richard Rodgers Theatre in Manhattan, where, for the past 10 months, the most unlikely cultural phenomenon in a generation – a hip-hop musical about the Founding Father best known for authoring the bulk of the Federalist Papers and being killed in a duel – has been performed eight times a week to sold-out houses. In its run downtown at the Public Theater and now here on Broadway, *Hamilton*, written by and starring Miranda, has been universally lauded as a singular work of brilliance. Last September, Miranda was awarded a \$625,000 MacArthur “Genius Grant,” and in April, he won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. Two weeks after the Pulitzer announcements, the show earned a record-breaking 16 Tony Award nominations, and its box office has been similarly off the charts. A recent article in *The New York Times Magazine* estimated that the show earns \$500,000 a week and could surpass \$1 billion in ticket sales in New York alone, where the Broadway run will likely last for at least a decade. The first production of *Hamilton* outside New York begins an open-ended run in Chicago in September. The Broadway production, completely sold out well into next year, is officially the toughest ticket on the planet.

In person and out of costume, Miranda recalls biographer Ron Chernow’s description of young Alexander Hamilton as a “slight, boyish” figure. Today, Miranda is wearing gray cords and a gray SOMB hoodie over a vintage Nintendo T-shirt. He speaks in hyperactive bursts – again, as did Hamilton per Chernow’s *Alexander Hamilton*, the book that Miranda casually picked up before a Mexico vacation in 2008.

“My dressing room has de facto been my office for the past 10 months,” Miranda tells

me as he welcomes me inside and grabs a couple of coconut waters from his mini-fridge. A partially deflated Darth Vader balloon hovers in the corner – fittingly enough, since this is where Miranda composed the cantina music for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* – and a small bookshelf holds works by Herman Melville, Robert Caro, Judd Apatow and the photographer Sally Mann. On the vanity beneath the large dressing-room mirror, there’s a bouquet of flowers, a laptop and an ACLU cap.

Not much light, though, and it’s a lovely spring day, so Miranda suggests we head to a secret rooftop balcony – hence, the *Birdman* tour. After crossing the darkened stage, taking a few flights of stairs and passing through the empty lobby, we end up outside, in a long, narrow alley. “This is the way the president came into the theater,” Miranda says. He points to a nook where cast members smoke, then ducks into another door. Eventually, we’re back outside, sitting on a hidden balcony overlooking the massive Scientology church across West 46th Street.

Miranda’s first musical, *In the Heights*, which he began writing during his sophomore year at Wesleyan, also played here. It drew on hip-hop and Latin music to tell the story of the Manhattan neighborhood where he was born, Washington Heights. Miranda’s parents moved to New York from Puerto Rico; his mother was a psychologist and his father worked in politics, including as a liaison to New York City Mayor Ed Koch. Miranda tested into an elite public high school (where one of his best friends was future MSNBC host Chris Hayes) and became a fanatical aficionado of rap and Broadway musicals. In hindsight, the fusing of two of America’s greatest indigenous art forms – both excellent storytelling mediums – feels like a no-brainer. But with the possible exception of Jay Z’s “Hard Knock Life,” earlier attempts at making the worlds collide largely proved embarrassing.

Bay Area rapper Daveed Diggs had never seen a Broadway show before he was cast as Hamilton nemesis Thomas Jefferson. “I knew *Fiddler on the Roof*, because my mom really liked that and we always had the album around the house growing up, and that was about it,” Diggs says. “But I was totally intrigued the second I heard the demos of the songs in *Hamilton* and read through the music. The rapping is good – that’s what really got me.”

The show, almost entirely sung-through, transforms esoteric Cabinet debates between Jefferson and Hamilton into riv-

eting, delirious rap battles. Songs about Hamilton’s complicated love life get more of a Destiny’s Child treatment, and the rest of the score is expansive enough to include torchy show tunes, high-camp Brit pop and nods to hip-hop classics (from “The Message” to “Empire State of Mind” to “Lose Yourself”). The sheer virtuosity of Miranda’s songwriting has prompted an insane who’s who of music legends (hip-hop and otherwise) to catch a performance, including Jay Z and Beyoncé, Eminem, Paul McCartney, Madonna, Nas, David Byrne, Q-Tip, RZA, “Weird Al” Yankovic, Jon Bon Jovi, Busta Rhymes and Cher. (Questlove was such a fan that he co-produced the now-platinum cast album and is working on an upcoming “mixtape” that will feature covers and reinterpretations of *Hamilton* songs by other artists.)

“When you’re developing your voice as a rapper, you figure out your cadence – your swag – and that’s how you write,” Diggs says. “Lin managed to figure that out for all of these different characters – everyone has their own swag, and it feels germane to them. And that’s really impressive. Hercules Mulligan [a Hamilton pal who spied on the loyalists during the American Revolution] raps exactly like a dude named Hercules Mulligan!”

Even more radical than the catholic musical approach is *Hamilton*’s reckoning with our country’s creation myth. There’s an almost indescribable power in seeing the Founders, in an otherwise historically rigorous production, portrayed by a young, multiracial cast. “It is quite literally taking the history that someone has tried to exclude us from and reclaiming it,” says Leslie Odom Jr., who comes close to stealing the show with his turn as Hamilton killer Aaron Burr. “We are saying we have the right to tell it too.” If every presidential administration gets at least one mass-cultural moment it de-

serves, then *Hamilton* has become the Obama era’s *Wall Street*, its 24, its *Spice World* – even more so, perhaps, because the show has actually managed to fulfill candidate Obama’s promise to bridge the divide between Red and Blue America. Fans of *Hamilton* include Mitt Romney, Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Dick Cheney and the president himself.

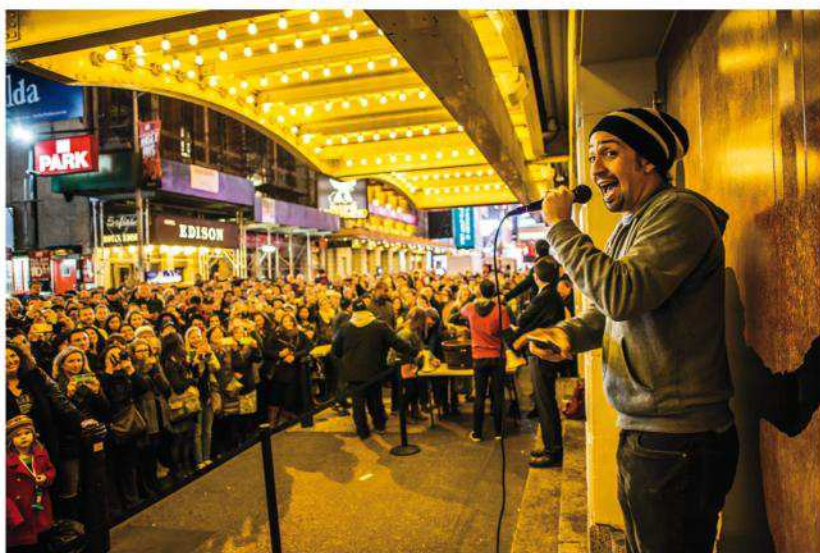
Christopher Jackson, *Hamilton*’s towering George Washington, has known Miranda the longest of any of the major cast members, having previously starred in *In the Heights*. “Lin told me about his idea for *Hamilton* a few days after that fateful va-

★

“This election is no more bizarre than the one in 1800,” Miranda says. “Jefferson accused Adams of being a hermaphrodite.”

Contributing editor MARK BINELLI wrote “The Good Fight,” about Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, in March.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: PRODUCED BY COCO KNUDSON. SET DESIGN BY ROB STRAUSS STUDIO. WARDROBE BY JENNIFER HOHN, KIMBERLY MARK, JEANNIE NAUGHTON AND EMILY RONEY.



BIG SHOT Miranda (top) performs for fans outside the Richard Rodgers Theatre before a show. Above: Leading the Sharks in a grade-school production of *West Side Story*.

cation," Jackson recalls. "We were actually onstage doing *Heights*. He said, 'I've got the next thing. It's about the Treasury secretary!' And then he paused, and before I could say, 'What?!' the music started and we had to do '96,000.' When Ron Chernow came to see *Heights*, I had never seen Lin that nervous. He said, 'Ron Chernow's here!' I said, 'What does that mean?' And he said, 'The show needs to go *well* today.'"

Odom first saw a workshop version of *Hamilton* at Vassar and found himself responding, almost viscerally, to "The Story of Tonight," an early number in which Hamilton and three friends (Mulligan, the Marquis de Lafayette and John Laurens) boisterously drink together in a tavern on the eve of the Revolution. "That's the one that made me a puddle, because it was four men of color onstage singing a song about friendship and brotherhood and love, and I had never seen that in a musical," Odom says. "I had seen white guys do it, in *Jersey*

Boys, in *Les Miz*. Never seen a black guy. So I was a mess, and from that point, I was along for the ride."

Phillipa Soo, who makes her Broadway debut as Hamilton's wife, Eliza, says that she had to figure out her relationship to her stage husband, to answer questions like, "Who is this man to me, and why do I love him?" In the end, she realized her "research was already here for me. It became less about finding facts about Eliza and Alexander Hamilton and more about just watching Lin. I remember him coming into the rehearsal room in his slippers, because he'd been across the street writing. And I was like, 'Oh, my God, this guy is nonstop! Kind of like Hamilton.'"

Over the course of our two-hour conversation, Miranda also spoke of the kinship he feels with Hamilton – and more broadly, about the task of liberating history's most revered figures from their own legend. "I really don't accept the premise that we li-

onize any of these dudes," he says. "I think our goal is to present them as human, and not just the five facts you know about them from our history books. Nobody gets off scot-free in our show."

So at the outset, what was your biggest secret dream of what "Hamilton" could do?

Honestly, my secret dream has already happened: I hoped the hip-hop community would embrace the show. Pretty much all of my other dreams had already come true on the last show. With *In the Heights*, I went from being a substitute teacher to being a writer, from not having a career in this world to having one. I don't think anything will ever touch that. But the hip-hop world and the Broadway world really didn't know each other or meet, and for the most part, the hip-hop community missed the show.

With "Hamilton," once you hit on the concept, did all of these parallels between the hip-hop world and Hamilton's life – the duels, the way he's so death-haunted, his rising from poverty – coalesce right away, or did they come to you gradually?

The moment that cemented it was reading about how Hamilton's writing an essay gets him off the island [St. Croix]. It wasn't circumstance. He didn't stow away. He wrote an essay about how shitty the island was after a hurricane had destroyed it, and the essay became popular, and he got a scholarship to get off the island because of that. I was like, "Oh, he literally wrote his way out of his circumstances. That's it! That's everything."

So to you, immediately, it was like, "Oh, that's like Jay Z or Eminem scribbling lyrics in his notebook."

Jay Z, Eminem, Biggie. Lil Wayne writing about Katrina! And so, having had that insight very early while reading Ron Chernow's book, I never pictured the literal Founding Fathers again. It shouldn't have been that much of a surprise, but it was a bit of a surprise when reviews and articles made so much about the nontraditional casting that we've done. Because that's how I always saw them.

Initially, you toggled back and forth between playing Hamilton and Burr, right?

Yeah, well, I mean, how could you not? There's enormous fun to playing Burr, which Leslie finds every night. It's the same thing as, if you're going to be in *Les Miz*, do you want to play Valjean or Javert? Do you want to play the virtuous guy with the crazy high notes who's onstage more? Or do you want to play the badass who's always a step behind him? When I was writing "My Shot," I'd go, "Oh, man, if I could play Hamilton..." And then I would write "Wait for It" and go, "Fuck, if I could play Burr..." I spent a lot of time in both their heads. The reality is, I got to play all the parts. I got to be Angelica and be as smart as her. I got to be Eliza and be as uncon-

ditionally loving as her. That's the fun of writing the piece. I got to be Jefferson and basically run out of fucks to give and saunter around my house and try to think of what he would say.

You started writing this show in 2009, as the modern-day Tea Party movement was taking off. And now this current political season has been so bizarre.

Yeah...[chuckles]. You could probably find more-qualified people to talk about this. I've been so in the world of this show that I probably don't know half the ins and outs of current politics.

Well, specifically, having the Founding Fathers look like America today strikes me as so radical. And it made me think of some of the Tea Party rhetoric, of how these conservatives were saying, "We need to take our country back." And to me, this show felt like it was saying, "No, you're not taking the country back, and in fact, we're part of the whole history of this country, even going back to the puffy shirts and the tricorne hats."

I guess the direct line I can pull on the most is between Hamilton's life story and the immigrant narrative in our country. The fact that immigrants have to work twice as hard just to get here, but that also, at some point, it's going to be thrown in your face as a negative. In Hamilton's case, it was Jefferson and Madison writing basically the same things you would hear about Obama during election cycles: "How do we really know where he's from?"

Right.

But I think the bigger parallel is like, "Twas ever thus." I think the notion of our Founders being these perfect men who got these stone tablets from the sky that became our Constitution and Bill of Rights is bullshit. They did a remarkable thing in sticking the landing from revolution to government. That's the hardest thing to do. You can go across the ocean to France, where they totally fucked it up and then got stuck in a cycle of revolution and tyranny. So that's not nothing. But that being said, there's compromise in our founding documents. There's compromise between North and South. There's compromise between manufacture and agriculture. The same fights we have over the role of our government now and the size of our government now are the fights they were having. Add the brutality of slavery to that mix as an undercurrent in all of those decisions. So I guess the biggest takeaway is, yes, this election cycle is bizarre. But it's

no more bizarre than the election in 1800, wherein Jefferson accused Adams of being a hermaphrodite and Adams responded by [spreading rumors] that Jefferson died, so Adams would be the only viable candidate. He was counting on news to travel slow! That, weirdly, gives me hope.

Would your dad, who works in politics, often bring his work home, and did that inform your own politics?

Well, it wasn't so much that he brought it home. It was more that I was getting dragged to meetings. The song "The Room Where It Happens" is partly based on political meetings where I was sitting in the back of the room, coloring. And I think I have an allergy to and cynicism about politics that can only be bred when [you've grown up with it]. You know, if I was a butcher's son, I'd be fucking sick of meat.

You recently appeared on John Oliver's show and did a song about the Puerto Rican debt crisis. Do you hear stories from family in Puerto Rico about how bad things are right now?

Yeah. I mean, it's just, everyone's broke. My uncle is a pastor at a church and they were robbed a couple of years ago at gunpoint as they were counting the collection plate. My cousin is graduating with a degree in engineering and he cannot find work on the island. His sister is premed, and she's going to be moving here. And those are the people who need to be staying on the island! But there's nothing for them.

The rap battle in the show between Jefferson and Hamilton about some states having to bail out other states is so resonant.

It's crazily resonant! What's interesting is how Hamilton saw debt as a way to unite the states. His thinking was, if we are entrenched in each other's finances, we're stuck with each other. Which is cynical! But also an effective way to unite the states. Contrast that with Jefferson, who had a much more agrarian "we'll live off our resources" vision of America in his mind. That side lost. That's not the America we live in. But I also think Jefferson really thought of himself as a Virginian more than an American. Hamilton's outsider status helped him think of this as one country before some of the other Founders. They would say, "Are you voting for Hamilton's plan, or are you your country's man?" And by "country," they meant Virginia. It's very hard to get out of a parochial mindset and think bigger. Hamilton was there already because he came from somewhere else.

As far as you using your bully pulpit, could you see yourself doing any campaign appearances if it's Clinton versus Trump?

I would rather play the back half of a horse in *Equus* [laughs]. I always get involved in voter drives. But I have no desire for my Twitter feed to be filled with a bunch of people screaming ad hominem attacks against anyone who voiced something different from how they feel. I don't feel the need to get in the middle of that. Just get out and vote.

Is Trump, in some ways, the embodiment of some of the things that Hamilton feared, as far as mob rule?

I don't know. Again, like I said, I am so less informed than your average ROLLING STONE reader, just because I've had my head up in this world. But I can tell you that Trump's politics about building a wall, that's old. And it's such a malignant form of a very common American electoral disease, which is, "Point at the newest people here and say they're the reason you're broke." That's as old as time itself. That's "Irish Need Not Apply." That's [Pat] Buchanan in the Nineties. And it's finding purchase with Trump right now.

Have you found that people on all sides of the political spectrum can project what they want onto "Hamilton"?

Absolutely. I've seen every person running for office compared to Burr: Hillary, Trump, Cruz, you name it. And there's Burr: "Talk less, smile more." That represents a lot of contemporary politicians. It's a Rorschach test.

As far as Burr's caution goes, I immediately thought of Hillary: "Wait for It"...

I've heard it applied to Trump as well. To anyone who wonders how an opinion will test.

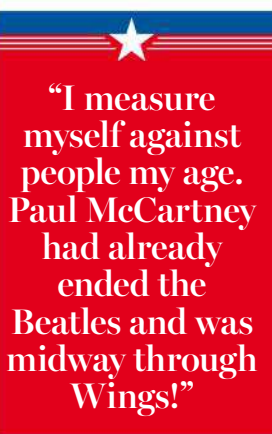
Do a lot of the politicians who've seen the show come backstage?

I've met my share. Bernie came back, Hillary came back. Mitt Romney was here a couple of weeks ago but didn't come back. I really wanted to see that hair in person. I'm in awe of his hair. I've had my agreements and disagreements with him politically, but, God, it's just so...every time! Maybe the best hair in politics. The Bush daughters came back, Laura Bush came back. They were lovely. So it depends on the night.

Any interesting exchanges?

A couple. The first thing Governor [Andrew] Cuomo said was, "I can tell you learned politics at the kitchen table." He was referring to "The Room Where It Happens" – that understanding of how the decisions are not made at the general meetings where all townspeople are heard. They're made in someone's kitchen over coffee before you go to the meeting.

And I guess he would know that as well as anyone.



He grew up in it. Hillary, she loved the John Jay shout-out. I guess she's a John Jay fan [laughs].

That's an obscure one.

Well, John Jay is not as well known as some of the other Founders, but he was one of the more writerly ones. He was a wonk! She was just like [Clinton voice], "I'm glad John Jay made it in!" Because he gets forgotten a lot. Bernie came after a day of campaigning, and I was like, "Thanks for seeing this after a long day," and he was like [Sanders voice], "Thank you for doing it. How do you do eight shows a week?" Biden was a trip. He used the men's room

that, when we visited the White House last time. I said, "What do you think about the fact that you're going to be in textbooks 200 years from now? How do you pick up a pen in the morning? How do you get out of bed?" Because I couldn't handle that shit.

What did he say?

He said, "It's freeing, actually." Which I found really interesting. I said, "Why?" And he said, "Because I could be unpopular today, and that's OK. I can tell myself, 'All right, people who loved me are really mad at me today, but I think I did something that will make life incrementally better a generation or two generations from

for myself. So I'm saying no to a lot of cool shit that 2012 me or 2010 me would have said yes to.

Did you find that the storytelling aspect of hip-hop was complementary to musicals?

I fall in love with storytelling regardless of genre. Whether it's the new Aesop Rock album – "Blood Sandwich" is one of the best storytelling songs I've ever heard in hip-hop, full stop – or "A Weekend in the Country," from Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*. I love a well-told story in song. It's so hard! To get it all, in real time? One of the hardest things you can do. So I'm in awe, whether it's Kenny Rogers' "The Gambler" –

Country music is another great storytelling genre.

Absolutely. I'm a big Lucinda Williams fan. "Car Wheels on a Gravel Road": "A little bit of dirt mixed with tears..." That kind of detail in lyric writing is the shit I live for. And what's been exciting is everyone dropping their cultural baggage at the door of this show. I came by it all honestly. I came by the research honestly, I came by the love for hip-hop honestly. It all comes from a place of love. You've seen hip-hop used in musicals before, but usually it's winking, it's ironic, it's "Oh, my God, white people are rapping!" Wink, nudge, air quotes. As opposed to just treating it as a storytelling form the same way musical theater absorbed rock & roll. It's so crazy that *Hair* came out in the fucking Sixties, and still, anytime there's a rock musical, it's like [stuffy voice], "Does rock belong on Broadway?"

I read that, initially, when you had Ben Franklin as a character, you were going to write him a country-rock song.

It was a very Decemberists-y type song. If we're starting from the place that Hamilton is hip-hop, Ben Franklin's a totally different generation. So I wouldn't want to see Ben Franklin rapping, because that doesn't make sense to me. I only got halfway through his song. But the pitch was, Franklin's in France, wooing French ladies and making out with them.

Visually, with the purple coat, and with his swagger, I couldn't help thinking of Prince when Jefferson first emerged.

Absolutely. You know, he wore a brown suit at the Public. And I don't know what the conversation was between [director] Thomas Kail, Daveed Diggs and Paul Tazewell, our costume designer, but as soon as we went from brown to purple, we were off to the races. Again, it's about eliminating distance. If your mission is to make a story that happened 200-odd years ago resonate with contemporary audiences, what are the ways in which you can eliminate distance? And, man, does that purple suit with a frilly blouse do that. Just like when we pull out those micro-



LEADING MAN Miranda had a hand in every aspect of *Hamilton*'s creation (pictured here looking for revisions with the show's musical director, Alex Lacamoire).

in the lobby with everyone at intermission! He was just folks. Also, we knew about the passing of his son several months before, so during Act II [when Hamilton's son dies], we all felt an incredibly heavy heart. Knowing someone who's experienced loss of that magnitude, the loss of a child, and that they're in the audience, you carry with it a sense of responsibility. So we were all performing for him that night.

And Cheney came at some point?

Cheney came at the Public. He didn't come back after, but his wife sent nice words from both of them. You know, the thing I think about when Cheney comes, Clinton comes, all these guys, I always think of the song "History Has Its Eyes on You." Because these guys are graded on such a harsh curve, man. Like, Jefferson right now is being re-litigated because he's a character in this show. That was a long time ago! I got to ask the president about

now.' And I'm OK with being unpopular because I know I'm being graded on a crazy, longer curve."

So going back to you, since the wild success of the show, what have been some of the stranger offers you've received? Any superhero movies?

Writing music for *Star Wars* was amazing. J.J. Abrams was here and I offhandedly joked, "Hey, if you need cantina music..." And he said, "I do need cantina music!" So that sort of gave me incredible courage. Ask the thing you want to ask your hero while your hero is in front of you! Don't be a dick, don't be obnoxious. But also know that you may never get that opportunity again. I also say no to a whole lot of things. It's no accident that I read *Alexander Hamilton* while I was on vacation from *In the Heights*, and that most of the writing was also on vacations. That makes me double down on making room

phones for that Cabinet battle. It's the only anachronistic prop in the show.

Did you find yourself falling into a research hole?

Oh, absolutely. Burr is one of the more divisive characters in politics of that era. I read a book that really humanized him for me, *The Heartbreak of Aaron Burr*, by H.W. Brands. And then I read another Burr biography that I couldn't even get through two chapters of because it was so defensive in its tone. So that was a really fun puzzle to unlock. Because I needed to at least know my version of him. Ron has said I'm more sympathetic toward Burr than he was in his book, because he's Hamilton's twin in so many ways. He's Hamilton with privilege! He's Hamilton if Hamilton came from money instead of not.

You gave him some of the best songs.

He earned some of the best songs, because he's got such a weird and interesting interior life. When you come from money but have no family, what does that do to you, to your sense of caution? As opposed to Hamilton, who came from nothing and had no family, so, "Fuck it! I might be dead tomorrow, let's go!" And Burr's response to the same set of stimuli – mother died, father died – is "I better not fuck it up. I better not say anything." So it gets at something much more fundamental than politics or political disagreements or personal disagreements. It gets to how we're wired. How do we react to our mortality? Do we shut up and wait for moments to happen, or do we just kind of say whatever we think because who knows what's going to happen? And I think we're all a mix of Hamilton and Burr. I know I am.

In what way?

I write a lot, like Hamilton. I'm also pretty guarded about my personal life. And I'm also pretty aware of the consequences of my words. But I've just as many times been Burr. I've seen people my age and younger shoot to success, and I measure myself against people by age. Paul McCartney had already ended the Beatles and was midway through Wings when he was my age! Like, the entire Beatles, and he was not 30 yet. There's always someone to measure yourself against when you're like, "Fuck, what am I doing with my life?" So I really feel like I'm a healthy sense of both.

In an interview you did with "The New York Times" back when "In the Heights" came out, you mentioned that you had a whole ideas file on your computer called "Post-Heights."

I did, and I don't think I've touched it since [laughs]. Because then you fall in love with other stuff along the way. I thought *Team of Rivals* was going to be a musical, and then Spielberg got the rights to make it a movie, and I was like, "Oh, that's way better than I would have done!

Go do that!" But I don't need to tell every story. I just have to chase what I'm passionate about.

Do you have ideas of what you might work on next?

I do. But I never know what they'll turn into. I thought this was going to be a concept album, and it turned into a musical. There's an idea I'm chasing down now that I think is a movie musical, but again, I could be lying to myself just to be making a stage musical, like I did with this. So I don't know what it is yet, I just think it's a good idea. It's not historical at all! Which makes me very happy.

made it into a film that could never have existed in the theater. Like, you couldn't do that film onstage. So someone's going to have to have the brilliant idea of how to make this into a film on its own terms.

Opening it up in some way.

Right. And right now, our responsibility, as I see it, is to get as many people in this room as possible. Prioritize kids for whom it will make a difference in their grades and lives. So that's why we have this educational initiative that has 20,000 kids seeing it this year alone, and we're replicating that program with our two national tours that are coming out within the year.



STATE VISITS Miranda freestyle-rapped at the White House this year. *Hamilton* "has become a favorite in the Obama household," the president said.

Will "Hamilton" be a movie?

Someday. Probably not for, like, 20 years.

So not anytime soon.

I don't think so. The thing is, we worked really hard to make this work as a piece of theater. And I get it – I get it 50 times a day: "Please film it! Please film it so we can watch it!" And I understand it's hard to get to New York and it's hard to get a Broadway ticket. At the same time, filming is an act of translation. It is not being in the room with us. It's different. You will get the forest, you will not get the trees.

In recent years, have there been movie adaptations of musicals that you've liked?

Well, there are some really good ones, but I will tell you, they're all 20 years after the fact. Like, I thought *Les Miz* was a really strong adaptation. I thought *Chicago* was one of the best adaptations. *Cabaret*, which really took that show, a great show, and

We're starting to cast the Chicago production right now. And again, it's about getting people in the room to see the actual thing. And then there will be translations and adaptations, and that's fine. I'm still waiting on the *Wicked* movie, man!

Do you have any interest in making a stand-alone album, hip-hop or otherwise?

Like, me as, like, a rapper? Um... if I have a really good idea. That's the thing. I'm very story-driven. I don't think anyone wants to listen to an "evening of..." album with me. The part of hip-hop that's tricky for me is the line between autobiography and reality, which hip-hop artists and pop artists use to incredible effect. They blur that line and make you think, "What's real and what's not?" And then we're all listening to *Lemonade* and freaking out. But I have no interest in applying any of that to my personal life. I like telling stories.

So you want to be a character, you don't want to be autobiographical.

Yeah, and I think 16 tracks of listening to me walking my dog and playing with my son would be fucking boring to any hip-hop fan. That being said, if I have a good idea for an album, I'd certainly love to pursue it. There are artists I'd like to write for, whose voices I love. I'd love to write a song for Marc Anthony one day. I'd love to collaborate with Juan Luis Guerra. I think he's one of the best songwriters alive. But that doesn't extend to me wanting to do an album of standards, or covers. My ego is healthy, but it doesn't extend in that particular direction.

Have you met a lot of your hip-hop heroes post-"Hamilton"?

Yes. Busta was the first and the greatest, because he sat in the front row. That was about as nervous as I've been. For me, it's been exciting to meet a lot of lyrical giants. Andre 3000, when he came, I was very conscious of him. Eminem was another one of those. I was sick when Jay Z and Beyoncé came, so I missed that particular pleasure of performing for them. When Nas came, I was a wreck. I actually gave him my copy of the Chernow book that I took on vacation! It was very impulsive. It's always interesting when your heroes react in a way that's in keeping with what you think of them. Nas' reaction to the show was "I want to read more about this era," because Nas is our hip-hop scholar and intellectual. So I just gave him the book! [Laughs]

That's hilarious.

It was a very impulsive thing to do. But better than, you know, Martin Shkreli fucking buying it.

Did you have any other interesting exchanges with these guys?

Eminem was really cool. He asked, "What happens if you mess up?" [Laughs] And I said, "I messed up three times because I knew you were here!" Will Smith was a big one. LL Cool J was a real interesting one. I'd met LL before he came, because I had a friend who was on that *NCIS* show. I remember asking him at the time, "Are you going to make any new music?" And he said to me – this is a great quote and it's always sort of stayed with me – "I don't want to make something that isn't a classic." But the way he said it was, "I want to work in marble." That really stuck with me. So when he came to the show, I said, "I tried to work in marble, sir."

What have been some of the other more surreal moments that have come with the success of this show?

Every single day. Watching the crowds outside grow. Watching it amplify online. The cast album was a really lovely thing. I fell in love with shows through cast albums – most people do – so once the album came out, that was a very surreal

week, the way it democratized everything. I remember it was a week of just answering questions on Twitter, watching people decode it, after I'd been alone with it, with me and my collaborators and cast members, for a very long time.

Can you talk about the mixtape?

I don't know what it's going to be! What we're trying to do is basically get people at their most inspired, because, again, the ethos of the show was, I'm inspired by this story that has to be a hip-hop story, and I'm inspired to invoke the rap gods and R&B gods that I loved. So now it's about turning to those rap gods and heroes and saying, "What in the show inspires you? Go make something." And we're not being very doctrinaire about it. Right now, and this could change because we're still making tracks, but it's about a 50-50 mix of covers and inspired-bys. So for every song where it's an artist covering the song verbatim, as it appears in the show, there's a song where you take the hook of "Right Hand Man," but it's two rappers invoking the theme of "Right Hand Man" and doing what they want with it. There's a version of "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story" that's not about Eliza, it's about who lives, who dies and who tells your story.

Do you have a release date yet?

No. I know it's going to be in the fall.

Have you been in the studio for this?

I've been a couple of times. I have to play you one verse. [He plays a track by a rap legend whose identity I promise to keep secret.] This is fucking insane, right? I looked like the Michael Jordan crying meme when I first heard this!

So do you know how much longer you want to be performing this?

Everyone is sort of in it now. The question couldn't come at a worse time, because literally every actor is in their contract negotiations right now. We were all contracted through July. It was a year contract. So I don't know who's staying and who's going. Who tells our story [laughs].

Right. But you, personally, haven't made up your mind yet?

I don't know that I want to break the news here. But I can tell you that with *In the Heights*, I did a year. I did a year and got out. And that show was as successful and joyous as anything I've ever done. But I still needed time to write, and so I did a year.

Do you feel like you need some space to work on the next thing, whatever that might be for you?

Part of it is just to tuck my son in at night, who is my best friend in the morning but who I don't get to see at night, except one night a week. And this thing is going to run on its own power. I'm really proud and grateful for that. In a way, I know that I'm going to get more writing done while I'm in the show, because having your life structured this way, where you have to be somewhere every night at 8:00, forces you to organize your time. So as soon as I'm done talking to you, I have Disney stuff due tomorrow that I'll be working on. It's for an animated movie that's coming out Thanksgiving weekend, called *Moana*. I got that job, let's see – my son is a year and a half old, and I got that job the week we found out we were pregnant with him, so I've been working on it for about two years concurrently with *Hamilton*. That's sort of the other dream-come-true kind of thing.

You know? I'm here because *The Little Mermaid* fucked my shit up when I was nine, and I have never been the same since. Now I'm working with the original directors of *The Little Mermaid* on this animated musical, writing songs and chasing stories.

How much do you relate to that aspect of Hamilton's character that seems to be racing against time and always trying to write?

I think I relate to that. Part of that comes with

the inherent contradiction of what I do for a living.

What do you mean?

I'm very aware that an asteroid could kill us all tomorrow. But I create works of art that take years and years to finish [laughs]. So it's an enormous act of faith to start a project. I think compounding that is my awareness that we lost Jonathan Larson before he ever got to see a preview of his show, *Rent*. He never saw what would change so many lives, mine included. So that sense of mortality is with me, always. It's intensified by having a child. And how much of his life am I going to get to see? And hopefully his kids' lives. It's funny, I finished college with a ton of stuff written. I was painfully aware of the financial sacrifices my parents were making so that I could go to college, so I was not going to just leave with a B.A. in something. I was going to leave with stuff. I wrote a show every year of college. Not for credit, but because I needed to be leaving with more than just a B.A. So in that way, I'm very Hamilton-esque, in that I'm aware of both time and of the incredible opportunity that I'm lucky to have, and not wanting to squander either.

"I write a lot, like Hamilton. I'm also pretty guarded about my personal life. And I'm aware of the consequences of my words."

An Outlaw at 80

Kris Kristofferson has faced memory loss and the death of old friends, and has also found peace – just don't try to tell him what to do

'O

BY NEIL STRAUSS

PHOTOGRAPH BY
PETER YANG

H, MY GOD, THE SON OF A BITCH IS back," announces Lisa Kristofferson as she stands in the kitchen of her Los Flores Canyon home in Malibu. The son of a bitch, who is next to her, is more commonly known as Kris Kristofferson. He has been her husband for the past 36 years. He also happens to be one of the greatest songwriters of all time (covered by Johnny Cash, Janis Joplin, Elvis Presley and some 500 others), not to mention an iconic actor in his own right (from *A Star Is Born* to the *Blade* movies).

Three decades ago, "the son of a bitch is back" may have been the rallying cry of Kristofferson's girlfriends or wives after he went off on a drinking or cheating bender. But today, just weeks away from Kristofferson's 80th birthday, it means something different entirely.

It means that the rugged, fiercely independent spark of consciousness that is Kris Kristofferson, which has been fading for the past few years due to memory loss, is brightening again – to everyone's surprise.

For years, doctors had been telling Kristofferson that his increasingly debilitating memory loss was due to either Alzheimer's

or to dementia brought on by blows to the head from the boxing, football and rugby of his teens and early twenties. Some days, Kristofferson couldn't even remember what he was doing from one moment to the next.

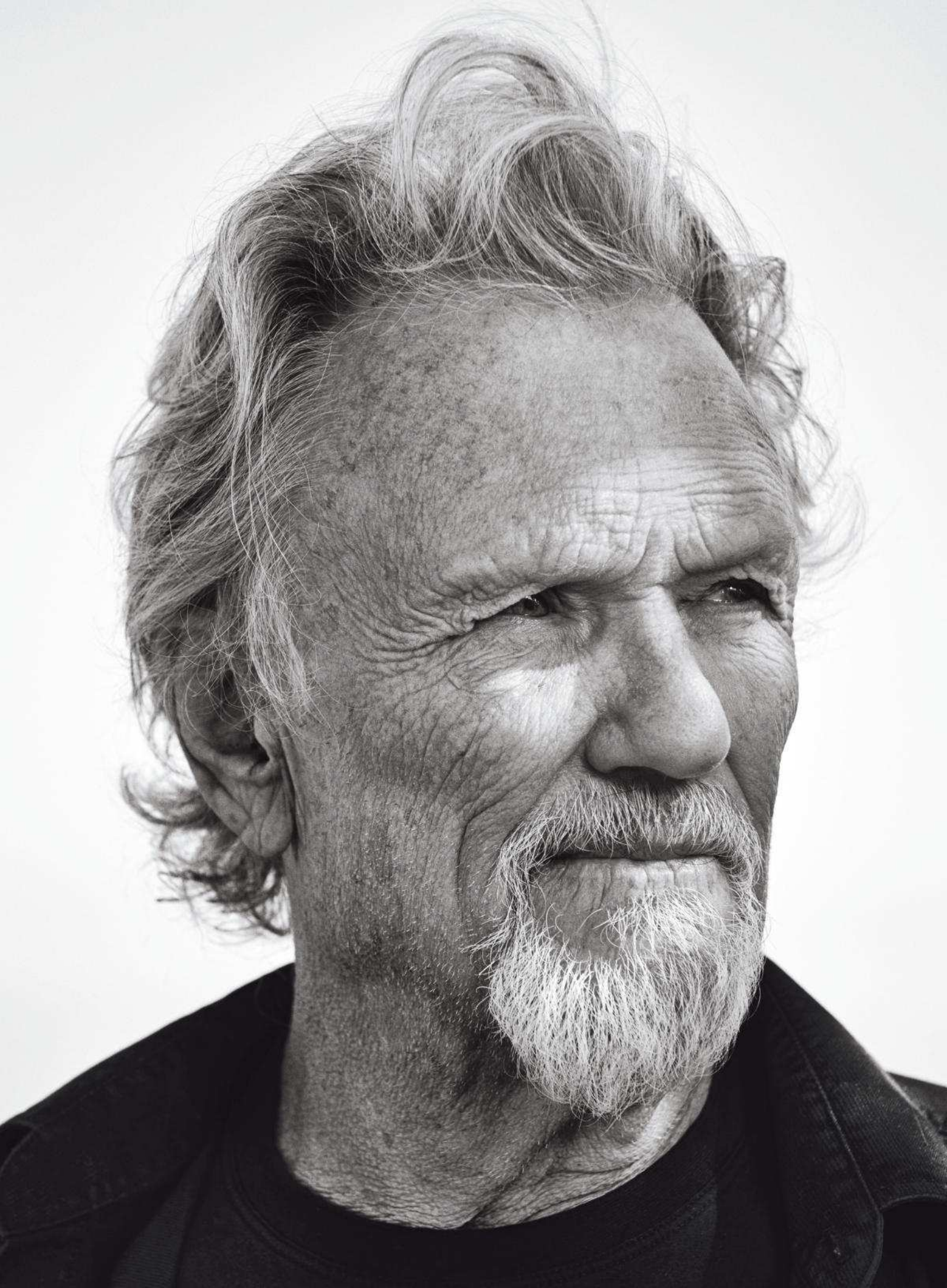
It became so bad that Kristofferson started writing a song about it. "I see an empty chair/Someone was sitting there," it began. "I've got a feeling it was me/And I see a glass of wine/I'm pretty sure it's mine."

But then, like the chair and the wine, he forgot about the song. And it lay unfinished like many others he's begun these past few years. In this case, his daughter Kelly completed the song, which remains unrecorded.

Then, earlier this year, a doctor decided to test Kristofferson for Lyme disease. The test came back positive. His wife believes he picked it up from a tick as he crawled around the forest floor in Vermont for six weeks while filming the movie *Disappearances*.

"He was taking all these medications for things he doesn't have, and they all have side effects," she says. She is wear-

**FREE MAN
IN MALIBU**
Kristofferson
in May



ing one of her husband's tour merchandise shirts. After he gave up his Alzheimer's and depression pills and went through three weeks of Lyme-disease treatment, Lisa was shocked. "All of a sudden he was back," she says. There are still bad days, but "some days he's perfectly normal and it's easy to forget that he is even battling anything."

Kristofferson stands next to her, alongside the kitchen counter, a black T-shirt tight on his thin but still-solid frame, his gray goatee neatly trimmed. Behind him, there is a wall covered with pen and pencil marks, denoting the growth of his children, stepchildren, grandchildren and foster children. One would imagine that he'd be elated by his unexpected recovery.

"Yeah," he replies, unconvincingly, when asked.

So you were never scared about losing your past? Kristofferson stares straight ahead, into a sweeping ocean vista, his sky-blue eyes shining brightly under a brow that thrusts out like a rock ledge. "What good would it do?" he says with a shrug.

Seventeen years ago, Kristofferson had bypass surgery. As he was being wheeled into the operating room, the doctor told Kris and Lisa that this would be a good place to say goodbye. "I hope it's not goodbye," Lisa said.

His response: "So what if it is?"

This blunt, fatalistic streak is something Kristofferson has carried with him for most of his life like a birthmark. It's one reason directors like Martin Scorsese and Sam Peckinpah have cast him in their films.

"I really have no anxiety about controlling my own life," Kristofferson says, taking a seat at the head of a wood dining table. "Somehow I just slipped into it and it's worked. It's not up to me – or you. I feel very lucky that [life]'s lasted so long because I've done so many things that could have knocked me out of it. But somehow I just always have the feeling that He knows what He's doing. It's been good so far, and it'll probably continue to be."

He pauses. "Now as soon as I said that, of course..." He looks upward as if a lightning bolt is on its way down to strike him.

And there he goes: Just on the verge of a happy ending, Kristofferson imagines the worst will happen instead. It's a theme that runs through many of his best-known songs. Saturday nights end in Sunday hangovers ("Sunday Mornin' Coming Down"). Great relationships end, leaving lifelong regret as their legacy ("Loving Her Was Easier [Than Anything I'll Ever Do Again]," "Me and Bobby McGee"). The perfect lover who sweeps a woman off her feet is destined to abandon her, robbing her of body, soul and pride ("The Taker").

Contributing editor NEIL STRAUSS wrote about Chris Carter in January.

To spark his memory, Kristofferson has been going through all these old songs again. A box set of his first 11 albums, *The Complete Monument & Columbia Album Collection*, due on June 10th, rests on the counter. He has been listening to it album by album to get reacquainted with his life's work. "It just takes you back like a picture of something would," he says.

I bring him the box set. He examines the sleeves of each disc, which are designed like the original vinyl album covers. "I was also interested in seeing if they still sounded good to me," he continues. "I've been pleasantly surprised, particularly with this one." He points to his third album, *Border Lord*. "I can remember at the time being so disappointed at the reception it got."

His wife sits to his left and looks at him, beaming at his recall. "To me, the song is

**"IF THE WEED
HURTS MY
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what matters, not necessarily the performances," he says as he moves a napkin to examine a picture of him in his twenties, looking disheveled in his meager Nashville bedroom. "Just the words and melody – that's what moves your emotions."

The box set is just one flake in a flurry of activity happening around Kristofferson this year. There was a celebration of his life and music at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville in March, for which he reformed the Highwaymen with Willie Nelson, Jamey Johnson and Waylon Jennings' son Shooter. Kristofferson recently traveled to Canada to record with Gordon Lightfoot and Ronnie Hawkins. He played the lead in a new Western, *Traded*, also coming out June 10th. His upcoming album, *The Cedar Creek Sessions*, includes a duet with Sheryl Crow for his first-ever recording of "The Loving Gift," a song made famous by Johnny and June Carter Cash.

He's also embarking on a special string of summer dates with Nelson: Just before Merle Haggard passed away this year on his 79th birthday, he requested that his backing band, the Strangers, continue without him. So Kristofferson, his longtime friend, decided to bring the Strangers with him on the road for a few dates to perform his and Haggard's songs together.

"I'm thinking of his face when he was dying," remembers Kristofferson, who was touring with Haggard up until the end. "I had the highest respect for him. Knowing him and Willie and Waylon and Johnny Cash – that's been one of the biggest blessings in my life."

In his current state of mind, there is one period of his life that Kristofferson often returns to when reflecting on his past – a decision that, for him, changed everything. It was a combination of luck and choice. The year was 1965; the luck was that he was a captain in the Army and signed up to go to Vietnam, but was assigned a teaching position at West Point. The choice was to leave the Army instead. After reporting to West Point, he moved to Nashville to try to make it as a songwriter. As a result, this Oxford-educated Rhodes scholar soon found himself emptying wastebaskets at Columbia Recording Studios.

"I'm kind of amazed by the whole thing," he marvels. "I was on my way to a totally different life. And all of a sudden I committed my future and all my family and everything to this! It was pretty scary."

Kristofferson and Lisa say that his brother joined the Navy; his father was a two-star Air Force general; both grandfathers were in the military; even his great-grandfather was in the Swedish armed forces.

"Didn't your mother say she would rather have a gold star in the window?" Lisa asks him. Kris gives a sheepish shrug. It is his way of saying, "I can't remember." It is an expression he uses a lot these days.

"When you have a family member that died during World War I, they would put a gold star in the window," she reminds him. "And your mother said she would have rather had a gold star in the window than to see what you're doing with your life."

"She said that I was an embarrassment to the family," he recalls a little later. "I've given them moments of pride, when I got my Rhodes scholarship, but she said, 'They'll never measure up to the tremendous disappointment you've always been.' Why tell your kid that?"

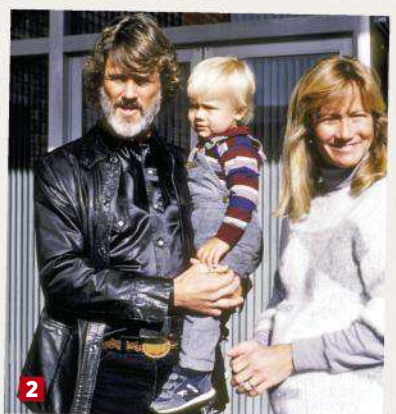
But when his mother sent him a scathing letter disowning him, Kristofferson experienced something he'd been seeking his whole life: freedom. It's an independence he's embraced to this day. He bucked Nashville's conventions, helping start the outlaw-country movement. More recently, he canceled a book contract for his autobiography because he didn't want to work on a



Beat the Devil

(1) In 1971. "His nickname used to be Kris Pissed-off-erson," says his wife, Lisa.

(2) With Lisa and son Jesse, 1985. (3) With Nelson and Haggard, 2014.



deadline. His latest album includes a song called "You Don't Tell Me What to Do."

"Even if someone tells him to have a good day, he'll say, 'Don't tell me what to do,'" Lisa says. "He's unmanageable. You can't manage him."

Kristofferson looks down at the table and screws up his face as she speaks.

What were you just thinking? I ask.

"I..." He pauses and purses his lips. "I think it's probably true."

In several of Kristofferson's songs, characters burn brilliantly in the present moment without a past or future, trading in "tomorrow for today" or proclaiming, "Yesterday is dead and gone/And tomorrow's out of sight." In an unexpected twist of fate, Kristofferson sometimes finds himself similarly marooned in the present moment due to his memory problems. Except unlike the characters in his songs, who usually find loneliness there, he says he feels remarkably content and well-supported.

Kelly has observed that he "forgets to get nervous," and Kristofferson notes that a couple of years ago, his anxiety just went away. "He hasn't always been happy," Lisa says. "His nickname when he was doing *Star Is Born* was Kris Pissed-off-erson." These days, one of his favorite things to do is simply mow the grass or weed-whack for hours at his primary home, in Maui.

He recently went to a reunion of the Pomona College football team, where he saw

his former coach, who's now 93. And he's still in touch with his childhood nanny Juanita, who's 93 and still calls her former charge *mijo* (my son).

"She probably saved my life," he says. "Because God knows my mother was an asshole. And my old man was gone most of the time."

He adds that without Juanita, he "probably would have ended up as some serial killer."

TWO WEEKS LATER, Kristofferson sits in a booth of a Malibu studio, playing the part of a ghost for an animated pilot for Fox. When he reads a line about cellphone coverage,

Kelly laughs: "He doesn't know what a cellphone is. He calls them hand machines."

Afterward, the director asks Kristofferson to sign a guitar. "I'm not a very good guitar player," he tells Kristofferson.

"Neither am I," Kristofferson responds.

Self-deprecation is one of Kristofferson's most conspicuous traits. He is especially down on his singing: "I don't think I'm that good a singer," he says. "I can't think of a song that I've written that I don't like the way somebody else sings it better."

Yet even as he's pushing 80, there is no shortage of demand for his voice – whether it's films, TV dramas, cartoons, performances or albums. He has one of the most unique careers in music, which he says was inspired in part by seeing Frank Sinatra excel as both a singer and an actor.

We drive back to his house with Kelly and her boyfriend, Andrew Hagar, son of Sammy. When asked half an hour later about going to the studio today, Kristofferson works his tongue around the inside of his mouth, thinking hard. "I'll be honest with you," he finally says. "I don't remember going to the studio."

Kris and his wife have spoken about Lyme disease, head injuries and aging interfering with his memory. But there's one thing they haven't mentioned: the smoking.

"Do you think the weed hurts your memory?"

He answers quickly and defiantly: "If it does, it's too bad. I'm not quitting." He pauses and considers it further. "I'm sure that it slows me down and doesn't make me the sharpest-witted person in the room, but I'll probably be smoking till they throw dirt on me."

As we're speaking, one of Kristofferson's sons marches into the kitchen. He is known as War Pig, though he was born Jody. A heavyweight wrestling belt testifying to his prowess in the ring hangs in the living room. Each of Kris' children seems to have taken on one aspect of his career, even down to his youngest son, Blake, who majored in creative writing.

One of the few ambitions that Kristofferson never got to realize was as a literary author. In his Maui home, there are trunks full of notepads – a treasure trove of short stories, journal entries and even novels, none of it published.

"You have stories from college on," Lisa reminds him. "All through the Army, all through your time with Janis Joplin, all through your working in Wake Island, working in Alaska, working fighting fires and on the railroad. You even have stories from being a janitor in Nashville."

"I don't feel very creative anymore," Kristofferson confesses a little later. "I feel like an old boxer." He laughs. "The brain's gone, but I can still move around."

"He says that," Kelly protests, "but he leaves little pieces of songs lying around the house all the time."

Kristofferson considers this. "I may have some more creative work in me," he finally admits, then concludes on a characteristically impassive note. "But if I don't, it's not going to hurt me." 2

*** NATIONAL *** AFFAIRS ***

Sanders Fights On

The Rolling
Stone Interview:
A defiant candidate
on what he's trying
to achieve

BY TIM DICKINSON



A FUTURE TO BELIEVE IN

BERNIESANDERS.COM

THE REVOLUTIONARY
Sanders on the campaign
trail in Connecticut

NOT EVEN “THE MATH” CAN SPOIL A Bernie Sanders rally. The democratic socialist senator from Vermont has outperformed any rational expectation, building an insurgent campaign that has captured 20 states, propelled by more than \$210 million in grassroots contributions, averaging under \$30 a pop. But with each passing state election – including the ones he’s winning by less-than-blowout margins – Sanders’ long shot grows longer. ★ At a mid-May Sanders rally in Salem, Oregon, there’s not a hint of gloom among the overflow crowd of 4,000 packing the National Guard Armory auditorium to roar for its champion. The vibe in Salem, Oregon’s capital city, is Phish-show-meets-*Portlandia*. Fans wear *FEEL THE BERN* shirts emblazoned

with the Grateful Dead’s lightning-bolt logo – tweaked to give the skull Sanders’ untamed hair and glasses.

Party atmosphere aside, there’s a serious undercurrent to this evening’s rally. Jesse Botkin, a former Army specialist who served one tour in Iraq and two in Afghanistan, is searching for a job and working on a computer-science degree on the side. He backs Sanders, he says, because he feels invisible to the political class: “Economically, nobody’s really taking into consideration the actual fucking people.” Botkin knows Sanders is promising too much; his agenda – for socialized health care and tuition-free college, among other lofty goals – is “not realistic.” But for Sanders’ backers, the candidate’s ambition is a feature, not a bug.

Even at this late date, with the threat of a Donald Trump presidency looming, Sanders pulls no punches against Hillary Clinton. His stump speech links her to a “rigged economy” – highlighting “hundreds of thousands of dollars” in contributions to the Clinton campaign by a member of the Walton family, whose Wal-Mart fortune, Sanders says, is richer than the combined wealth of the “bottom 40 percent” of the American people. Transforming jeers into cheers, Sanders demands of the billionaire clan, “Instead of making large campaign contributions to Secretary Clinton, pay your workers a living wage!”

Offstage, out of the spotlight, there’s little glamour to a grassroots presidential campaign. Late in the evening following the Salem rally, *ROLLING STONE* met up with Sanders at his hotel – a no-frills La Quinta behind a Costco near the municipal airport, where rooms start at \$89 a night. Pulling up a chair near the make-your-

own-waffle station of the hotel’s breakfast bar, Sanders is dressed in a rumpled blue dress shirt and gray slacks. The senator is plainly worn down from the grind of the day: At times during the interview he seems to rest his chin against his chest, as he peers intently over the top of his wire-rimmed glasses.

His body may be out of gas, but Sanders’ mind is fiery and cantankerous. In the course of our 45-minute conversation, he blasts Trump as a “phony” and a “dangerous man.” He also details his long-shot paths to the nomination, which he still believes he can win; his ambitious agenda to transform the Democratic Party into a people-funded movement for the working class; the challenges of having had to run a campaign “by the seat of our pants”; and why he feels sorry for Hillary Clinton – almost.

How does Trump’s emergence as the nominee affect your endgame with Secretary Clinton?

“We are addressing the American people’s anger, but in the opposite way of Trump. We’ve got to bring people together.”

Trump’s emergence should make it clear to Democratic delegates at the convention that Bernie Sanders is the stronger candidate. If you look at all of the national polls out there – virtually all of them – and if you look at all the state polls, we do much better against Trump than does Hillary Clinton.

Looking at the polls you’re talking about, there seems to be a swing vote that could consider your candidacy or Donald Trump’s. You seem to be drawing from the same stream of voters here.

I wouldn’t go so far on that....[Laughs]
To a certain degree....So what is the common denominator among those voters?

Here’s what the common denominator is: To the media’s great shock and to the pundits’ great shock, there are millions of Americans who are very, very angry. And they’re angry because they’re working longer hours for lower wages. They’re angry because they’re working two and three jobs. They’re worried about the future of their children – getting decent jobs and getting homes. And then they look at the leadership of the Democratic Party and the leadership of the Republican Party and they don’t see people addressing – or even paying attention to – their needs. And Trump comes along and starts to blame Mexicans or Muslims or women for the problems facing society. The people are seeing that someone at least is speaking to their anger. And that’s unfortunate. That’s a very ugly approach. But that’s why he’s succeeding.

We are also addressing the anger of the American people. [But] in a constructive way. And that is to say: We’ve got to bring people together. Do the exact opposite of Trump, who is trying to divide us up. To look at the real causes for why the middle class is declining, and develop public policy that addresses the needs of working families.

You’ve described your path to victory now as “narrow.” What does that long shot look like? How would it work?

Here’s how it works. It works in three ways. Number one: For us to win the majority of pledged delegates, we’re going to have to do very, very well in the remaining states. I think we have a shot – a real shot in California. We’re putting a lot of our resources into that. New Jersey, we have a longer shot, but we can do it. So the path to victory is to do extremely well. You can do the arithmetic as well as I could. That’s one path.

The second path is to tell the superdelegates, for example, we just won by 15 points in West Virginia. But it looks like six of the eight superdelegates are gonna vote for Hillary Clinton. We won in Washington state with 70 percent of the vote. Won in New Hampshire with 60 percent of the votes. Yet almost all of the superdelegates



are voting for Clinton. And I think the people of the states will make it clear to the superdelegates that they have to respect the wishes of the voters of those states and vote for the candidate who won overwhelming – I’m not talking about one or two points, I’m talking landslide – victories.

The third path to victory: making it clear to the superdelegates that their primary goal is to make sure we defeat Donald Trump. And that I am, in fact, the stronger candidate. And if they want to be risky – voting for Hillary Clinton, who could lose. I’m not saying she will. I’m not saying she can’t defeat Trump. I think she absolutely can beat Trump. But I am the stronger candidate against Trump.

Is this fight to persuade superdelegates to back you over Clinton a test of your philosophy of a political revolution? You’ve got a friendly opposition that you’ve got to convince to do something. And it’s arguably in their electoral self-interest....

No. It’s an inside-the-Democratic Party strategic effort, just trying to get the delegates we need. It’s not the political revolution. The political revolution is waking up millions of people to stand up and fight for their own rights. The political revolution is to bring out 1.2 million people at rallies throughout this country. The political revolution is to bring in more individual campaign contributions at this point in a campaign than any candidate in American history, averaging \$27 apiece. A political revolution is in every single primary or caucus we win an overwhelming ma-

SANDERS’ GENERATION

Campaigning in Carson, California. “When you look at the future of this country, we are winning the majority of people 45 and younger. That’s the political revolution.”

majority of voters 45 years of age or younger. I wish we were doing better among seniors. And it does blow my mind: I’ve spent my entire life in Congress fighting for seniors, working to expand Social Security. Look at my record. Much better than Clinton’s on senior issues. And she’s beating us badly among seniors. But, important point: When you look at the future of this country and the future of the Democratic Party, we are winning the overwhelming majority of people 45 years of age [and younger]. That’s the political revolution.

You’ve been criticized – including in ROLLING STONE – for not putting more specifics behind what the political revolution means as a form of governing—

Well, I—

Can I ask the question? To put it in terms that you were talking about tonight at the rally, I think the critique is not blaming Bernie Sanders for thinking too big, but critiquing Bernie Sanders for sweeping the “unpleasant truths” of our political system right now – the way it ties everything up in knots – “under the rug.” Many people say you’re right as rain on the policy and the objectives, but “Boy, I just don’t think he can do it.”

Yes...

So how do you do it? What are the specifics that allow you to—

What are the specifics about how I, personally, all by myself, do what nobody in American history has done? And I’m being criticized? Why don’t you do it? Why doesn’t the editor of ROLLING STONE do it? Look. You know. With all due respect, that’s an absurd question.

Hopefully, we will end up winning the nomination and winning the general election. If we don’t do that, which is certainly a possibility, we will have accomplished an enormous amount. Could we have done better? Could I do better? Of course. I’m not quite sure what the—

The question is: Assuming you’re president and you’re dealing with a Congress that looks like the one we have today...

Let me just comment on that. If I am elected president, the odds of the Senate remaining Republican would be minimal. You’d have very large turnout helping Democrats up and down the line.

But you’d still likely face Paul Ryan as your negotiating partner.

Absolutely.

And I’m trying to figure out how you get something like public-college-for-all passed with Paul Ryan as your counterpart. Given that you just said today that they won’t play ball.

To answer that question successfully requires us to think outside of a zero-sum game. You’re saying to me, and it’s a fair question: “Bernie, if you sit down with Paul Ryan and say, ‘Paul, I want a tax on Wall

Street speculation to make public colleges and universities tuition-free and to lower student debt,' the likelihood is that Paul won't say, 'Hey, Bernie, why didn't I think of that? Fantastic idea! Let's go forward together.'" So what's the strategy? The strategy – which is unprecedented, and this is where we're talking about thinking outside the box – is to have a president who actually, vigorously goes around the country and rallies the American people, who are in favor of this idea. This is not some sort of fringe idea. The American people want it. And [the president] rallies the American people and makes it clear that people in the Republican Party – or Democratic Party – who are not sympathetic will pay a political price. That changes the dynamics.

Everything that I campaign on – they're not fringe ideas. They're not radical ideas. They're ideas that the American people support. What we've got to do now is close the gap that currently exists between the American people over here [*gestures to one side of the table*], who have needs and goals and desires, and a Congress [*gestures to other side*], which in almost every instance is ignoring what the American people want.

Now, is it easy to do? No. How do you do it? It's a good question. And the truth is, right now I'm a bit busy running for president to have figured that out, other than to tell you that it requires a mass-based political effort bringing millions of people together to stand up and fight back. Unions could play an important role. Environmental groups, women's groups – groups that are already actively involved. We're going to bring people together to effectively organize and put pressure on Congress to do the right thing.

Here's a specific policy question that has generated more heat than light. And that is this question of how you would break up the banks. You drew a lot of heat on this after the "Daily News" interview. I want to

understand, what is your preferred policy mechanism for breaking up the banks? Does Dodd-Frank allow you to do it? Or—
Absolutely.

—are you going to need an act of Congress?

Well, you can do it either way. You can pass the legislation that I've introduced, which would require an act of Congress. [*Editor's note: The "Too Big to Fail, Too Big to Exist" Act would, according to Sanders' summary of the bill, "require the break-up of JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, Gold-*

"That's a good question. Unlike all your other dumb questions. That's why the media love me. I'm so subtle."

man Sachs, Bank of America and Morgan Stanley within one year of enactment."] Or you can do it with Dodd-Frank. Or you could do, in a sense, a combination of the two by having a Sanders secretary of treasury, in the first 100 days of our administration, make a determination of which banks – if they failed – would bring systemic damage to the economy, i.e., too big to fail. And then take that information, through section 121 of Dodd-Frank, which is the process by which the Fed and other, uh, other regulatory agencies, work to go forward to breaking up these institutions. In other words: We would be more aggres-

sive. On my own, we would have the secretary of treasury coming in saying, "There are six major banks that, if they fail, would bring systemic damage. Let's go forward and under section 121 of Dodd-Frank..." That's what we could do. All right?

If you're unable to secure the nomination, which is the mathematical likelihood, what are your priorities for the convention: Reforms to the process? Platform planks?

Number one, we want the strongest progressive platform that we can [get]. That would incorporate many of the ideas that we've fought for: from Medicare for all; paid family and medical leave; 15-bucks-an-hour minimum wage; very strong language on climate change and a carbon tax; stopping fracking; public colleges and universities tuition-free, et cetera, et cetera.

Number two is, we gotta change the rules that govern the Democratic Party. For one, I think the idea of having closed primaries is a dumb idea.

Why?

Because the American people, more and more people, are looking at their politics as outside the Democratic and Republican parties – for a variety of reasons. Some of them think the Democratic Party is too conservative. But whatever, they are independents. Three million people in New York state could not cast a vote in the Democratic or Republican primary for the president of the United States. On the surface, that's absurd. You really could almost raise legal issues. You're an independent in New York, you're paying for that election, it's conducted by the state. But you can't vote? Think about it. And from a political point of view, it is absurd, because independents do vote in the general election. So what you're saying is, "You can't vote now, and we don't want you to come into our party. But you can vote later on." I think that's dumb. Given that so many young people are independent, we ought to welcome them in.

FROM LEFT: MATT ROUBKE/AP IMAGES; U.S. AIR FORCE—JEFF CHIU/AP IMAGES; SEZER66/SHUTTERSTOCK; ANDREA FRANCESCHINI/PACIFIC PRESS/LIGHTROCKET/GETTY IMAGES; JIM HUGHES/SHUTTERSTOCK; SALTWATER BREWERY

THREAT ASSESSMENT THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SCARY



WITH US

Clinton: **Trump not qualified** to be president.

Openly **gay man confirmed** as Army secretary.

S.F. police chief resigns after another citizen killed by cops.

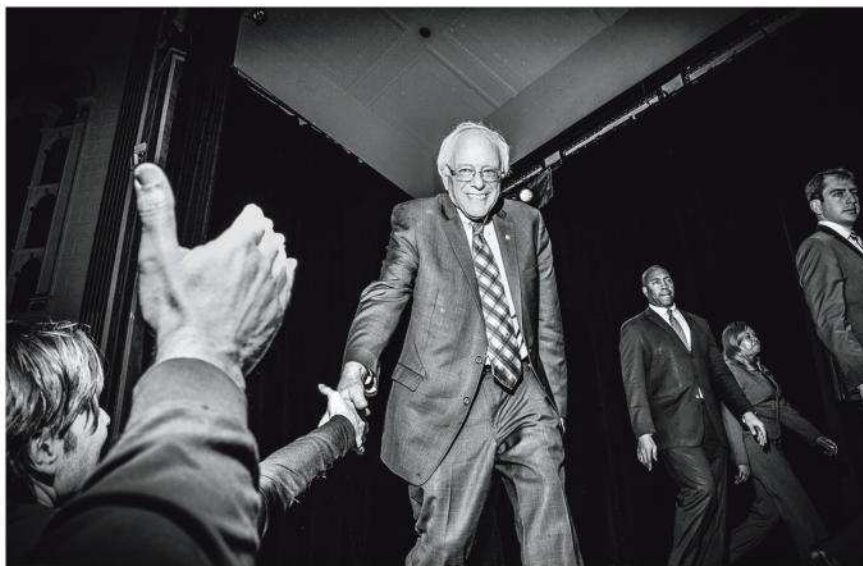
Portugal runs on renewable power for four days straight.

Pope Francis calls **employers denying health insurance** "true leeches."

Taliban leader Mullah Mansour killed in drone strike.

White House rule **expands overtime pay** to millions of workers.

Edible six-pack rings



Issue number two is the whole issue of superdelegates. The deck is stacked in favor of the establishment candidate. If my memory is correct – where's my wife? [Scans the lobby] She's not here. I think 450 superdelegates committed to Hillary Clinton before the process began. You need less than 2,400 delegates to win. You have an establishment candidate who goes to the governors and the senators and the Congress people and the money people. It would be very, very hard for the best insurgent candidate – a candidate who did really well among the people – to take that on. Does that make any sense?

Furthermore, we have to deal with the way that the party raises money. It really is quite amazing. And I feel sorry for her in a sense. Hillary Clinton spends an enormous amount of time – look at her schedule – running all over the country. You know what she does? She goes to wealthy people's homes – and she raises money! Here you are in the middle of a campaign, and she's

THE PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

Greeting a New York crowd in January. "Everything that I campaign on – they're not fringe ideas. They're not radical ideas. They're ideas the American people support."

out raising money. I'm talking to 10,000 people. She's out raising money. We have got to figure out a way in which the Democratic Party has the ideology and the positions that excite ordinary people who are prepared to contribute to the Democratic Party or the candidate.

I think to some degree, we have proven in this campaign, having received 7.6 million individual campaign contributions, more than any candidate in history at this point, it can be done. Last night, we were in Sacramento. We had 16,000 people, OK? How many Democrats are out there talking to thousands of people as opposed to being at some rich guy's house talking to 10 people and walking out with \$30,000?

This has got to be the goal: to communicate with people, bring people into a political movement. Not just spend your whole life hustling money.

Your fundraising network gives you a tremendous bargaining chip in an endgame in which you're not the nominee. What kind of promises or concessions might you be looking for from Secretary Clinton for her to start enjoying dividends from those relationships?

It's premature to talk about. And I don't think it works quite like that.

How's that?

Right now, I'm running for president, and that's what we have to focus on.

Would you seek or accept an invitation to become the vice president?

[Waves hand, shakes head] That's too early to talk about.

You've lit a fire under a young generation of progressives – brought them out in droves to the Democratic Party's primary process. What does the party have to do to keep them there?

That's a good question. Unlike all your other dumb questions.

[Laughter, joined by nearby Sanders staffers]

That's why the media love me. I'm so subtle. Naw, I'm only kidding. You asked a very important question. Let me just give you an example: We were in Denver. We had a rally at 5:00 in the afternoon. We had 18,000 people. People who are passionate about wanting to change America, wanting to be involved in the political process. My guess is that 95 percent of those people had never gone to a Democratic Party meeting – or ever dreamed of going to a Democratic Party meeting. Two hours later, I walk into a [Democratic Party Jefferson-Jackson fundraising] dinner where there are 1,000, maybe 2,000 Democrats, who are contributors to the party, who are lawyers and whatever, local



AGAINST US

Paul Ryan on overtime: "We are committed to fighting this rule."

Megyn Kelly jobs softballs at Trump.

Google patents **car-hood glue** to stick pedestrians to self-driving cars.

Man-eating Nile **crocodiles** invade Florida.

Temperatures in India reach 123 degrees.

Fracking now leading cause of Texas earthquakes.

Yellowstone tourists try to "help" bison calf, cause it to be euthanized.

Poll shows **Trump leading Clinton**.

politicians. Older people, upper-middle-class and professional people – who are active in the Democratic Party.

There are two different worlds. So the question is: What happens when that 18,000 marches into that room with 2,000 people? Will they be welcomed? Will the door be open? Will the party hierarchy say, “Thank you for coming in. We need your energy. We need your idealism. C’mon in!”? Or will they say, “Hey, we’ve got a pretty good thing going right now. We don’t need you. We don’t want you”? That’s the challenge that the Democratic Party faces. And I don’t know what the answer is.

Some of the signs from the party are not encouraging....

The danger is, when you bring people in, the whole composition of the Democratic Party begins to change. It becomes much younger. It becomes more working-class. Its emphasis will be less on raising money from Wall Street and big-money interests than on transforming America. That is the dynamic that we’re lookin’ at.

This has been a tough campaign – a good campaign, but tough in many respects. I’ve heard a number of your supporters, more than I would expect, say that they’d rather vote for Trump than Clinton, or that they’d rather sit out the whole thing. What’s your message to those people?

Wrong question. It’s not, “What is my message to them?” It’s not my job to think that I can reach out and say to millions, “Do what I want you to do.” That’s not the way it works. The question that should be asked is, “Why?” I think Trump is incredibly irresponsible. And an incredibly dangerous person. A man who is primarily a showman and an opportunist and an egomaniac. A man who has already significantly damaged this country with his attacks on Mexicans and Muslims and women and veterans and African-Americans and so forth. Very dangerous man. And yet, how come you have millions of people who are prepared to vote for him and not Hillary Clinton? [We got] information from West Virginia just a few hours ago. Apparently, a lot of people who voted for me are not prepared to vote for Hillary Clinton. Why is that?

Many working-class people in this country no longer have faith in establishment politics. And, of course, that’s what Trump has seized upon. He’s a phony and an opportunist. But he has seized upon that and said, “I am not part of the establishment.” He’s only a multibillionaire who has worked with Wall Street and everybody else. But he claims not to be part of the establishment, right? That has created a certain amount of support for him.

I am the son of working-class people. It is incomprehensible to me that you have working-class people vote for a Donald

Trump. And yet working-class people in this country – white working-class people – have voted for Republicans for a number of years. Why? Why is that? How does it happen that they vote for candidates who want to send their jobs to China, want to give tax breaks to billionaires and want to cut their health care and their education for their kids? What are they doing? That’s the question we have to deal with.

The answer is not so much what the Republicans are doing. The answer is what the Democrats are *not* doing. [Taps his finger urgently on the table] They have not convinced the working class of this country that they are prepared to stand up and fight for them. They have convinced African-Americans that they are not a racist party, which is certainly true, as opposed to elements of the Republican Party.

“Trump’s a very dangerous man. He’s a phony, an opportunist, an egomaniac, and he’s already damaged this country.”

That they are prepared to fight for comprehensive immigration reform, which the Republicans certainly will not. They have convinced women that they are prepared to fight for a woman’s right to choose. All of that is excellent – and something, needless to say, that I support. But how come Democrats haven’t convinced the white working class that they are on their side? That’s the very important question that has to be answered.

It must be a source of frustration that you never scored the breakthrough you needed with voters of color. Your platform was geared to the economic interests of many of these voters. What made it difficult to connect?

Let me answer that factually. With the Latino community, there are states where we have won – in Nevada and Colorado. We’re doing very well with Latinos, in general, and very, very well with younger Latinos. What’s been very interesting is that the demographic splits have been less white, black and Latino than they have been on age. By now, if we do not have a majority of African-Americans 35 years and younger, I would be surprised. We are making progress with younger people. The percentage

of African-American votes that we get in California will be much higher than we got in the Deep South. On the other hand, I would suspect that Hillary Clinton is beating us 10 to 1 – 10 to 1 – with older black women. So that’s the dynamic. You can explain it as well as I can, but among younger people – white, black, Latino – we are doing well. Among older blacks, especially black women, we are doing very badly.

You’ve resisted taking cheap shots. There might have been times when it would have been politically advantageous to do so. Was that a difficult temptation to resist?

Naw. If you check out my political career, it’s not something I do. I don’t think it was politically disadvantageous. I look at politics very differently than other candidates. You get a good story and make somebody look bad for a day or two. But I think, at the end of the day, there’s a reason my favorability ratings are much higher than Clinton’s or Trump’s. And it’s because people appreciate that we’re trying to talk about the issues that impact them, and not just make personal attacks on people.

On a campaign, a candidate gets so much advice. Who’s been the lodestar – the person or people that you return to for guidance?

The difficulty that we have had in this campaign is that if you have the politics of somebody like a Hillary Clinton, you can bring together a team with a whole lot of political experience, people who have been part of Bill Clinton’s campaigns or administration, or Al Gore’s efforts, pollsters or media people or great surrogates. That is what the establishment Democratic Party has – hundreds of very knowledgeable people. Sophisticated people. I know many of them. I’ve been in the rooms during Obama’s campaigns. I have looked at the chart of literally the 39 different ways Obama can win. “If you lose Wisconsin but you win New Jersey and bup, bup, bup...”

But there aren’t a whole lot of people who understand the day-to-day mechanics of running a presidential campaign, who have history running a campaign for a candidate like myself. You tell me: Where are the democratic-socialist political consultants who have been involved in successful campaigns in recent history? There aren’t any. So we’ve had to put together our own campaign by the seat of our pants. And that’s been hard. We started this campaign with a handful of people from Vermont, people I’ve known for 20 or 30 years. And it’s grown. We’ve used people who have experience in the Democratic Party – the best that we can find. And we have political activists involved. We’ve met some great people over the campaign. A lot of great surrogates, from Nina Turner to Chuy Garcia to Killer Mike to Danny Glover, Susan Sarandon – great people

from different walks of life who gravitated into the campaign.

What has this campaign taught you about yourself? Has it changed you?

[Swats at the air with disgust as if battling the words to the ground] Next question!

What have you learned about America?

I've learned a lot. And that's been one of the fun aspects of the campaign, when you go out and talk to people tonight here in Salem, or people in Sacramento, and you see young people, white kids and black kids, Latinos, older people, working-class people. I was in Atlantic City yesterday morning, where the people who work in the casino industry are under tremendous pressure. They're losing their health care, they're losing their pensions, their pay has been cut because of bankruptcies – by the way, of Donald Trump, among others – and their willingness to stand up and fight back? It's a beautiful thing to see. It has been a very moving and gratifying experience to be working with those kinds of folks.

Is there a specific moment that stands out as the worst moment of the campaign?

There are good days and bad days.

A best day – a moment that, when things are tough, you reflect on?

The best day is yet to come. We'll invite you when I give the inaugural. How's that?

This is a grind – a crazy day you've had, looking at your schedule—

This has been a mild day, let me tell you.

How do you unwind? Do you read, do you listen to music? How do you keep yourself together?

The hardest part is you go weeks sometimes without a day off. If you work 15 or 20 days in a row, and you don't get a chance to relax or to think or to read or to reflect, it's tough. Anybody, in any capacity, any job. Also, I have – as a senator and a congressman – always come home to Vermont. That is my touchstone. I love my state. I love the people in my state. My children and grandchildren are in Vermont and New Hampshire [chokes down emotion]. And I don't see them enough. And that is not a good thing. I miss getting home. When you don't have that, and go from hotel to hotel for three weeks, it's hard. It's hard. But I volunteered to do this. I'm glad we're doing it. I look forward to winning this damn thing.

In the absence of a win, what does the Sanders movement look like after the 2016 campaign?

That's a very fair question, but I can't answer it right now, because that's not where my mind is.

You're going for broke now – any full-“Bulworth” thoughts for us?

I think we've got a shot at winning the remaining states. The big challenge, of course, is California. We have 40 people on the ground right now. I suspect more will be coming there. And we intend to run a unique campaign. We're going to do the rallies that I did in Sacramento all over the state. I suspect that by the time we're finished in California, I, personally, will have spoken to several hundred thousand people. We're going to run a campaign that nobody has ever run. Speaking to more people



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Arriving with his wife, Jane, at a Virginia rally in February. “Our major success so far is in laying out a broad progressive agenda,” he says. “That’s changing consciousness.”

than anyone has ever spoken to. How will it end up? Who the hell knows. But we're gonna give it our best shot.

Do you have any closing thoughts?

Yeah. And that is the American people are prepared to support real change. The difficulty that we have is not just the objective crises that we face – the disappearing middle class, income and wealth inequality, crumbling infrastructure, lack of universal health care and paid family and medical leave – the whole list of those things. That's not the major problem. The major problem is that we have an establishment that works 24 hours a day, seven days a week, led by a corporate media, which tries to condition the American people not to believe that we can accomplish those goals – or to even consider that those goals can be part of what American society is about.

You might think that there would be a lot of discussion about why the United States is the only major country on Earth not to provide health care to all people. People might say, “Look at the French system: It stinks, it's terrible. The Canadian system is terrible; that's why we don't want to do it.” But you don't have that discussion. Why is it that the United States, which spends far more per capita on health care than other nations, why don't we have a national health care system? Have you seen that debate once in your lifetime? On television?

Not outside the context of your candidacy.

Have you seen a debate coming on where a guy says, “Look, I think the British system is good, and it costs about one third of the American system”? And some American guy comes on and says, “No, I think it's a terrible system!” and argues it out about why our system is better. Let's have that debate! There's two sides to every story. You don't see that debate.

And my guess is that the majority of the American people do not even know that we are the only major country on Earth without a national health care system. They don't know that we're the only major country without guaranteed paid family and medical leave. No one tells them that you've got 20 people owning more wealth than the bottom half of America, 150 million people. They don't know that. Somehow CBS doesn't have

that special. I don't know why.

You see, that's what the campaign is about. Our major success so far is in laying out a broad progressive agenda, and forcing ourselves – the media doesn't want to hear what I have to say. Do you know how many endorsements we have gotten from major media in this country? [Holds up hand forming a zero] They're much more interested in Trump. For a whole variety of reasons. And if he attacks Hillary Clinton, calls her a bad name, that becomes a major story. If I talk about the disappearing middle class? Not exactly what CNN is interested in hearing, right? OK.

But what we have managed to do in this campaign is, they can't avoid somebody [like me]. Tonight, we were on CNN – I spoke for a while, for seven minutes. They gotta put us on a little bit. And suddenly people are hearing things they never heard before. And that's changing consciousness. So what we have got to do is to redefine who we can be as a nation. In a sense, what we are entitled to. What rights we are entitled to as humans. That's the struggle. And we're making a little bit of progress. 🇺🇸

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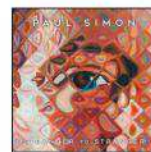
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Reviews

"Have you all heard the news:
'Heaven Finally Found.'
OK, it's 6 trillion light-years away,
But we're all gonna get there someday."
—PAUL SIMON, "Cool Papa Bell"

Paul Simon Finds a New State of Grace

The New York poet is as wryly funny and musically inventive as ever on his 13th solo LP



Paul Simon

Stranger to Stranger

Concord ★★☆☆

BY WILL HERMES

Some recurring images on Paul Simon's new LP: hospitals; insomnia; heaven and the after-life; riots and looting; a character called the Street Angel; wolves; love; God. Just some stuff in the head of a 74-year-old New Yorker, spun casually into art in that sagely, choirboy-cum-everyman voice. Even Simon's discourse on the word "motherfucker" – on the irresistible "Cool Papa Bell" – feels nearly Talmudic. "I think, yeah/ The word is ugly, all the same/ Ugly got a case to make," he sings, pretty as a motherfucker.

That's not even the funniest bit on *Stranger to Stranger*, a record that draws together nearly all of the man's accrued vernacular with seeming effortlessness: the gentle folk of Simon and Garfunkel; the gospel flavor of *There Goes Rhymin' Simon*; the percolating Afropop of *Graceland*; the samba fireworks from *The Rhythm of the Saints*; the vintage-sample flip-



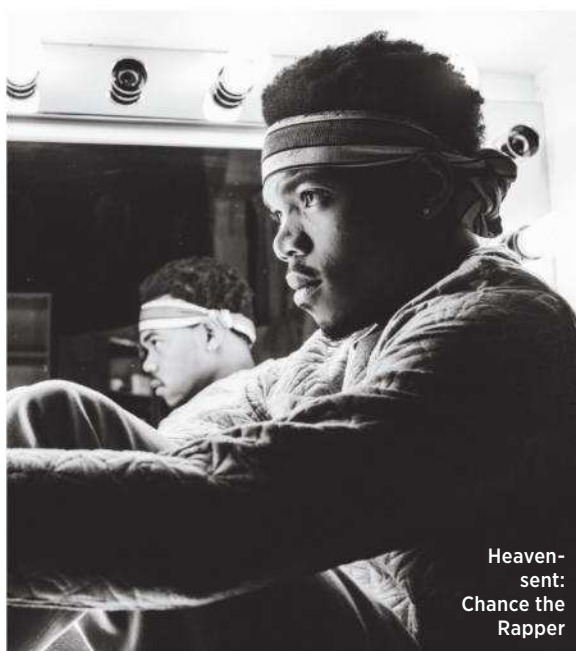
Reviews

ping of 2011's *So Beautiful or So What*. His latest continues in the same vein; it's as inviting, immaculately produced, jokey and unsettled a record as any he has ever made. His sophisticated feel for rhythm – always his secret weapon, even as a folkie – is in full force here, with beats by Italian Afrophile electronic musician Cristiano Crisci (a.k.a. Clap! Clap!) and his own varied, subtle vocal phrasing.

Stranger to Stranger's comic high point comes straight out of the gate on "The Werewolf," a tall tale about a middling Midwesterner whose wife kills him with a sushi knife, then shops for heavenly, or perhaps purgatorial, real estate. "Most obits are mixed reviews," Simon notes. "Wristband" is similar, whimsical storytelling jump-cutting into something darker. It begins with an amusing enactment of a musician locked out of his own show. Suddenly, the title becomes a metaphor for class war: "The riots started slowly," Simon sings soberly, "with the homeless and the lowly." There's no cheap resolution between the two elements; they just sit there, cognitive dissonance over boogaloo brass and a funky acoustic bass line.

As on most of his recordings, Simon explores new musical territory alongside the familiar. Besides Clap! Clap!'s earthy grooves, he draws on the sounds of iconoclastic avant-garde composer Harry Partch. On the final track, "Insomniac's Lullaby," cloud-chamber bowls, chromelodeon, zoomoozophone and bowed marimba pullulate like cosmic carpenter ants beneath Simon's acoustic guitar and voice, as he sings of lying alone in bed with his fears. "We'll eventually all fall asleep," Simon concludes – true, of course, in both the immediate and existential sense. It's a grace-note glimpse of the infinite, from a man who seems in no rush to get there. **C**

LISTEN NOW!
Hear key tracks from these albums at
RollingStone.com/albums.



A Chicago MC's Ultralight Vision of Heaven

Chance the Rapper mixes redemption and realism on a landmark album

Chance the Rapper *Coloring Book* ★★★★★



Kanye West called *The Life of Pablo* a gospel album. But the new mixtape-LP from Chicago's Chance the Rapper (who shined on TLOP's "Ultralight Beam") truly fits that billing. Gospel choirs are the backbone of this ecstatic album, but everything on *Coloring Book* seems to take a spiritual hue – "I don't make songs for free, I make 'em for freedom," he raps on the soulful rumination "Blessings." The result is the richest hip-hop record of 2016 so far.

Chance can paint a vivid picture of growing up in his beleaguered Chicago: "None of my niggas ain't had no dad/ None of my niggas ain't had no choice," he observes on the bluesy "Summer Friends." Yet when New York alt-soul songwriter Francis Farewell Starlite testifies through a vocoder, and a prayer is given midway through the track, the song takes on an aura of warmth and hopefulness. This sin-salvation tension is all over the album: "All Night" reaches back to Chicago house for a hard-drinking Saturday-night celebration that leads into the Sunday-morning church service of "How Great." On "Finish Line/Drown," gospel icon Kirk Franklin plays hype man as a choir sings, "Take me to your mountain/So someday Chicago will be free." By combining vintage American sounds and cutting-edge rhyming, he's taken hip-hop beyond Planet Rock and straight into the heavens.

CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



Tegan and Sara

Love You to Death Warner Bros.

★★★★

Folk-pop sisters continue their move onto the dance floor

Canadian sister duo Tegan and Sara pulled off a major reinvention with 2013's *Heartthrob*, shifting from smart indie folk to just-as-smart dance pop. Their eighth LP sticks with the new style; producer Greg Kurstin (Sia, Adele) plays such a big role, they're pretty much a trio now. But the sisters' songwriting is always front and center; whether they're airing romantic anxiety ("Boyfriend") or familial tensions ("White Knuckles"), this album often feels more melancholic than its predecessor, even when the music tilts toward euphoria. T&S's new sound could fill an arena, but emotionally, they're best suited for smaller rooms. **BRITTANY SPANOS**



Car Seat Headrest

Teens of Denial Matador

★★★★

Indie-rock prodigy turns in a Great Rock Album

Will Toledo's latest is the formal studio debut from a 23-year-old self-recording wunderkind whose substantial online oeuvre, anthologized on last year's *Teens of Style*, flagged a talent to be reckoned with. Once again, Toledo conjures Nineties indie aesthetics – Guided by Voices' British Invasion logorrhea, Pavement's lurching hooks – to channel pain, confusion and music-geek inside jokes. He's a rock-loving child of alt-rock's skepticism, fighting toward something to believe in, and winning. "It doesn't have to be like this!" he shouts on the glorious outro of "Drunk Drivers/ Killer Whales," a true Salvation Army of one. **WILL HERMES**

ZOE RAIN



Flume

Skin Mom + Pop ★★½

Aussie EDM artist laces big festival beats with hip-hop cameos and crossover dreams

On his self-titled 2012 debut, Australian producer Harley Streten (a.k.a. Flume) came off as an EDM artist with a pop side, mixing shades of R&B into his relaxed tracks. His follow-up is more aggressive (check the bass-driven banger "Wall Fuck"). Layered, abrasive electronics set a grimy backdrop for MC guest spots by Vince Staples and Raekwon, and even when Flume angles for the radio, with female vocals from breathy Canadian Kai and dirty-talking Swede Tove Lo, his beats slam and skitter. But for all its harsh textures, *Skin* is also richly melodic. On the opener, "Helix," a flutelike overture yields to a synth ripple that's punctured by a pummeling beat and rumbling squelches. That restless versatility is all over the LP, generating the emotional crests and sensory overload a festival crowd demands, but with a nuance that'll make it work even if you aren't shirtless in the desert. **KEITH HARRIS**



Rita Wilson

Rita Wilson Sing It Loud ★★½

The actress-singer-producer puts her own spin on rock, pop and country traditions

Rita Wilson is best known as an actress and producer (and as the wife of Tom Hanks), but her 2012 debut as a recording artist, *AM/FM*, was a strong set of classic pop and country covers that showed off her Broadway-steeped vocal chops. Wilson's second album, recorded in Los Angeles and Nashville with a slate of A-list co-writers, builds on that start, seamlessly fusing rock, country and singer-songwriter pop. "Along for the Ride" veers into Stones-y territory; on the lighthearted "Girls Night In," Wilson sings about getting her friends together and turning her living room into a nightclub. The album's best moments are its most personal: "Crying Crying," a powerful reflection on her recent fight against breast cancer, recalls classic Carole King, and "Joni" pays respect to a key musical influence. At her best, Wilson goes beyond honoring tradition to create something all her own. **BEVILLE DUNKERLEY**

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Reviews

Update: Pop

Divas Find Their Voices Inside the Hit Factory

THERE ARE MANY ROUTES TO power, or self-empowerment, for pop queens right now. "A little less conversation, and a little more 'touch my body,'" commands **Ariana Grande** on "Into You." Grande's *Dangerous Woman* is practically a concept album about the liberation of losing self-control. The title track and "Touch It" may be the best Weeknd songs not actually made by the Weeknd, full of slow-burning guitar drama and bad-girl sex, and the throwback Seventies groove of "I Don't Care" gives Grande's vocals the room to run free that they rarely had on 2014's *My Everything*. But while this album is more personal, there's nothing as insistent or universal as her monster EDM anthem "Break Free." For Grande fans, that's a bonus. For pop bystanders, it's the price of admission.

Meghan Trainor has the opposite problem on *Thank You*, an album so over-stuffed with punchlines and hooks it's like a tweet where every word is hashtagged. The cutesiness of her 2015 debut is dialed down – on "No," she hip-checks bros to the side with a distinctly Nineties R&B swagger. But the relentless self-affirmations – "I don't know about you, but, baby, I love me" – may still give you a toothache.

The second album from **Fifth Harmony** is just as relentless, though more varied. This is pop by committee, with hit doctoring from Kygo (adding a dash of tropical house to "Write on Me"), Britney Spears songwriter Alexander Kronlund



Grande



Trainor

Ariana Grande *Dangerous Woman* ★★★★★

Meghan Trainor *Thank You* ★★★★★

Fifth Harmony *7/27* ★★★★★

and so many others there's no room for a single vision. The 5H ladies are "whipping hard in the coupe" in "The Life," then talking about how they don't need a Benz in "Gonna Get Better." Highlights are the stomping horns and pop-trap drums of "That's My Girl," and the not-ready-for-this-jelly manifesto "Not That Kind of Girl" (swooping along on synth blasts like *Control*-era Janet Jackson). If Grande and Trainor are part of pop's growing singer-songwriter individualism, 7/27 shows the hit factory isn't giving up without a fight.

JOE LEVY

Fifth
Harmony

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By Peter Travers

Spoofing on Bieber

Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping

Andy Samberg

Directed by Akiva Schaffer and Jorma Taccone

★★★

MAD PROPS FOR THIS INSANELY funny mockumentary about the music biz. *Popstar: Never Stop Never Stopping* stars dynamo Andy Samberg as Conner4Real, a rap star whose career is tanking. His latest record doesn't even get a star rating in *ROLLING STONE*, just an emoji of a pile of shit.

Popstar is more freestyle fun than barbed satire. The cast, including many celeb cameos, is what Conner would call "dope." No spoilers, except to say that concert films, especially Justin Bieber's *Never Say Never*, come in for many teasing taunts.

Mostly, *Popstar* is nonstop party time for fans of the Lonely Island. Made up of Samberg, Akiva Schaffer and Jorma Taccone, this comedy collective raised the bar on *Saturday Night Live* with their digital shorts, including "Dick in a Box" and "Jizz



Samberg mocks the fame parade.

in My Pants." Their comedy CDs (*Incredibad*, *Turtleneck & Chain*, *The Wack Album*) are equally groundbreaking. The Lonely Island wrote *Popstar* together, with Schaffer and Taccone directing. In life, Samberg, Schaffer and Taccone were classmates through high school, shared an apartment in L.A. and created videos that brought early success. As one of the featured players on *SNL*, Samberg had supernova visibility that his pals did not. Did that cause friction? It sure does in *Popstar*. Schaffer plays Lawrence, a lyricist

who's so tired of Conner taking credit for his work that he retires to a farm. Taccone plays Owen, Conner's personal DJ, who feels demeaned when the star makes him wear a robot head onstage that "looks like the tip of Optimus Prime's dick." Conner, Lawrence and Owen first hit it big doing the "Donkey Roll" as the Style Boyz. Now they're all in service to the Conner4Real solo brand. Is art imitating life? Probably not. OK, maybe a little. But *Popstar* mixes hilarity with a surprising amount of heart. 4Real. **B**

A Mutant Traffic Jam

X-Men: Apocalypse

Jennifer Lawrence, Oscar Isaac, Michael Fassbender

Directed by Bryan Singer

★★½

JUST TO REFRESH — "X-MEN: Apocalypse" is the part in the *X-Men* franchise, following 2011's *First Class* and 2014's *Days of Future Past*, when the mutants are younger (and, in the case of Jennifer Lawrence's Mystique, much better actors). James McAvoy is the earlier version of Patrick Stewart's Professor X, and Michael Fassbender is in for Ian McKellen's



BORN TO BE BLUE Lawrence has mutant power as Mystique.

Magneto. But a question: Do you side with the mutants who want to live in peace with humans, or with the mutants who want to kill them?

Bigger question: Do you still care? Director Bryan Singer fires up the battles, but he has let his film get way overcrowded. So many new mutants, from Tye Sheridan's Cyclops to Olivia Munn's admittedly cool Psylocke, show up that you want Trump to impose a quota. The traffic jam distracts from an electric performance by Oscar Isaac as Apocalypse, the badass mutant from ancient Egypt. Even covered in makeup, Isaac — like Tom Hardy in *The Dark Knight Rises* — shows what a virtuoso actor can do. He's the life of the movie. **B**

No Wonderland Without Tim Burton

Alice Through the Looking Glass

Johnny Depp

Directed by James Bobin

★★★

SOMETIMES AN EXPLOSION of color and noise can hit the sweet spot, like it mostly did in Tim Burton's 2010 *Alice in Wonderland*. But the magic is missing in this sequel, as is Burton, replaced in the director's chair by James Bobin (*Muppets Most Wanted*). Most wanted here is easy charm instead of the hard sell. Mia

Wasikowska is back as Alice, now a ship's captain forced to return to Wonderland to save the dying Hatter (Johnny Depp), who thinks that he's responsible for the death of his family. Depp fits



MAGIC TIME Depp as the Hatter

beautifully into the uniquely eccentric world of Lewis Carroll, even when pining away from guilt. Alice must go back to the past by stealing a time machine from Time himself (Sacha Baron Cohen) and setting things right. The actors, except for Depp and Helena Bonham Carter (as the Red Queen with the giant head), merely go through the motions. Efficiency is no substitute for enchantment. **B**

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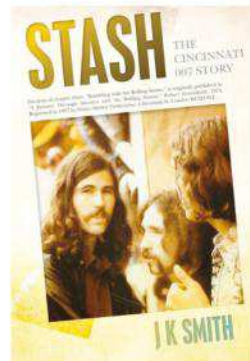
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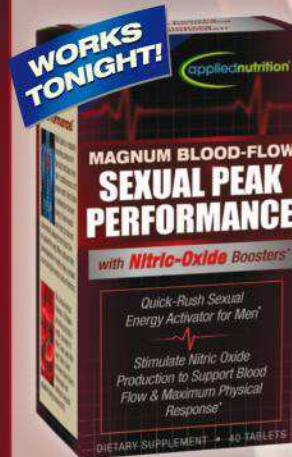
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Louis C.K.

The comedian on fatherhood, 'The Catcher in the Rye,'
loving (and hating) Boston, and Donald Trump

What do you wish someone had told you about show business before you entered it?

I'm not sure anything anyone said would've made life easier. It's like asking, "Do you wish somebody had told you about that scene in *Poltergeist* before you watched it?" [Laughs] There are a lot of moments in show business – and I'm sure in everyone else's life – where you're skipping along with a huge confidence, and then you step into a manhole and crack all your teeth on the pavement on the way down into the sewer. The idea of somebody telling me where all those holes were makes me sad. If I had avoided them, I don't think I'd be as good at what I do.

What were the manholes in your career?

You know, when I made *Pootie Tang*, when I made *Lucky Louie*. But I also have a lot of wonderful memories of those.

What have you learned about yourself from being a father?

I've learned I have more value as a human being than I thought I did, that I can be of use to other people. That's a very powerful thing.

What are the most important rules you live by?

Don't try to perfect everything. When you make your choices in life, just make the choice and then make it work after. Sleep as much as possible. Don't ever hit or kill anyone. And keep your mouth shut unless you really have to say the thing – although I don't usually go by that one.

What was your favorite book as a kid, and what does that say about you?

I read *The Catcher in the Rye* in sixth grade, and it depressed the hell out of me. But I loved the way it was written. It was this young guy talking about the panic that you might be left out of life and that you're not sure who you are. At that age you get used to feeling a little shitty. But I think it's very healthy to consider beautifully, artistically expressed versions of your bad feelings. It helps you see there's value to even the worst things in your life.

You're known for having creative freedom with your projects. Why is that so important?

It isn't about some arrogant need to not be told what to do. It's the only way to make the show as good as possible. If you were flying an airplane and you kept asking the passengers, "How do you want me to do this?" the plane is gonna go down. Ultimately, you wanna make things that someone's gonna find worth watching. So whether or not you have creative freedom, you have the same gun to your head, which is, "This better not stink."

Louis C.K.'s stand-up tour runs through September.

You spent much of your childhood in a Boston suburb. What's the most Boston thing about you?

That I hate Boston [laughs]. I really do – and I love it too. I always think any situation could break out into a fight; that's pretty Boston. I could be at a state dinner at the White House and I'd be like, "Somebody might start throwing some shit. It could get ugly."

What's the most indulgent purchase you ever made?

I bought a stupid fucking fancy watch. You're supposed to look at a watch for information, but I look at this watch and I go, "Jesus, why did I do that?"

What's the best advice you've ever gotten?

Chris Rock told me recently, "You have a disease, and that disease is that you can't do nothing for one month." I had just finished [self-released web series] *Horace and Pete*, and then I had something I wanted to do that was a big deal – I won't tell you what it was – and he said to give it a month and try not to do anything drastic. So I waited, and I'm glad I waited. He was right.

Given your feelings about the state of our culture, how do you avoid despair?

You can't get despair from culture. You can only get it from your own shitty life. I've been alive for 48 years, so the things that are shitty about our culture have come and gone already a couple of times. When my kids are having a hard time, I say, "Nothing ever stays the same." Whatever you're going through, it's gonna get better. It's also gonna get worse – and then better again.

How do you make sense of the Donald Trump phenomenon?

I'm not gonna tell Americans how to feel – I think you gotta get out of the way of people's feelings. It's a self-cleaning system. Whenever anybody says, "The voters are stupid" – well, the voters elected Obama against a war hero and a multimillionaire, which are classic choices for the other side. I have faith in the American people because of that. And if Trump does win, I feel like we will figure it out.

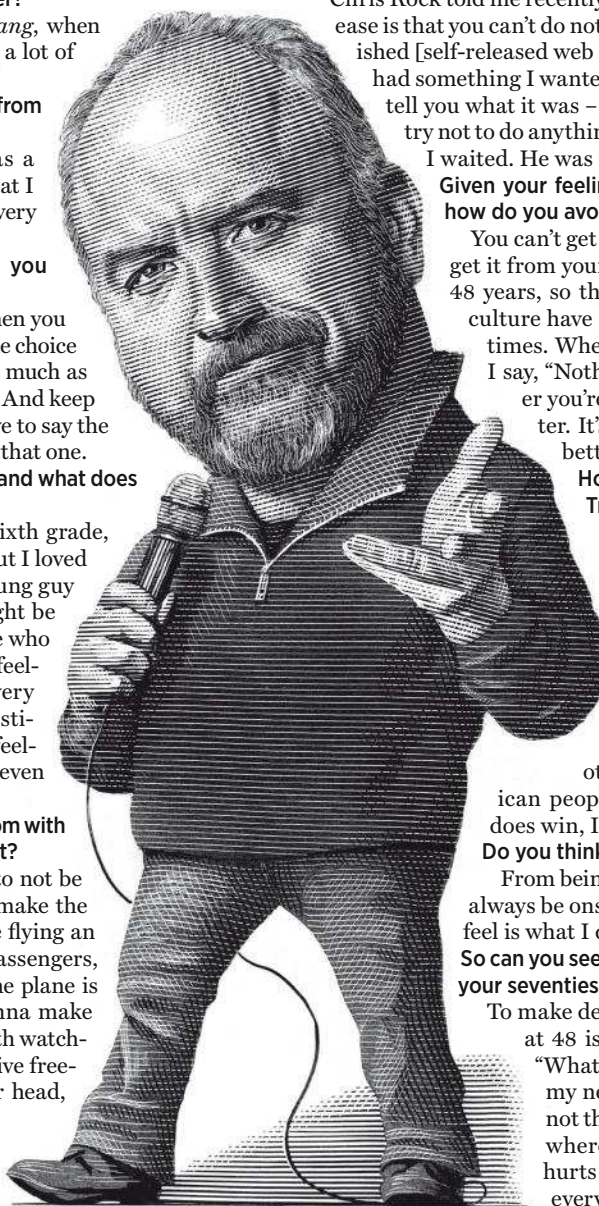
Do you think you'll ever retire?

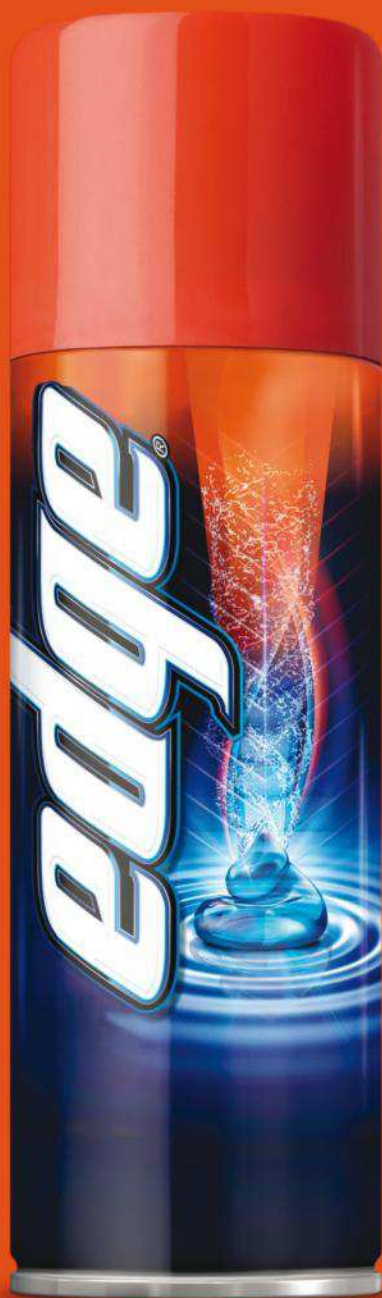
From being on camera, maybe, but I think I'll always be onstage. Stand-up is the thing I really feel is what I do and who I am.

So can you see yourself onstage doing stand-up in your seventies and eighties?

To make decisions about your 78-year-old self at 48 is a stupid exercise. It's like saying, "What am I gonna do when I'm a fish in my next life?" I don't fucking know! I'm not that guy yet. I mean, I have days now where if I sleep weirdly and my neck hurts the next morning, I'm ready to quit everything.

INTERVIEW BY BRIAN HIATT





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